How internal and external pressures shape the ethical challenges of Secondary School Teachers in Bangladesh: A review of the literature

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A dissertation submitted to

Auckland University of Technology

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education (MEd)

2026

School of Education

Abstract

Secondary school teachers in Bangladesh play a pivotal role in upholding the quality of education, integrity and public confidence. However, the teachers in this sector face persistent challenges relating to complex organisational and institutional environments where governance, accountability, corruption and political interference create significant moral dilemmas. This review investigates how internal and external pressures shape the ethical challenges experienced by secondary school teachers in Bangladesh. Special attention was given to how these challenges emerge while evaluating the effectiveness of existing education policies and governance frameworks in addressing these challenges.

A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was employed using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) framework to identify, screen and synthesis relevant studies published between 2015 and 2025. Following a systematic search and selection procedure, 38 studies were finally included and examined using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns related to governance, leadership, organisational culture, professional culture and teachers' working conditions.

The reviewed studies imply that the ethical challenges experienced by secondary school teachers are influenced by the interplay of internal organisational and external systemic pressures rather than by their individual choices alone. Internal pressures such as authoritarian leadership, constrained professional autonomy and organisational environment that limit ethical decision-making. External pressures emerge from political interference, corruption, highly centralised governance frameworks and inadequate institutional support. The review further highlights an integrity-survival paradox in which insufficient remuneration and underinvestment in education encourage many teachers to depend on private coaching and other supplementary income-generating practices, creating concerns between professional morality and economic instability. Together, these pressures contribute to jeopardised education ethics, which includes assessment related malpractices, diminished professional trust and weakened public confidence in the secondary education system.

The review concludes that a significant policy-implementation gap prevails between national ethical expectations and reality of school-level practices. Reinforcing ethical behaviour requires systemic

emendation which extends beyond supervisory dependency to reinforce empowered governance, ethical and distributive leadership, enhanced teacher support, improved accountability mechanisms and teacher wellbeing. This review contributes to the literature by providing a synthesis of the ethical challenges experiencing secondary school teachers in Bangladesh and presents evidence-based recommendations to strengthen ethical conduct and governance within secondary education.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, nor used artificial intelligence tools or generative artificial intelligence, nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed:

Date:**10.08.2026**

Artificial intelligence declaration

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Acknowledgments

This dissertation has been one of the most challenging, gratifying, and transformative experiences of my life. Never had I imagined that I would have the privilege to undertake independent academic research at this level or pursue a Master of Education in a beautiful country like New Zealand. When I look back, this dissertation represents far more than the accomplishment of a university degree; it reflects a journey of perseverance, faith, continued learning and personal growth that has transformed both my professional perspective and understanding of education. It has reminded me that even the most distant dreams can become reality through determination, and by the Grace of Almighty God.

Growing up in a tea garden community, one of the most underprivileged communities in Bangladesh, my educational journey was shaped by hardship, limited opportunities, and perseverance. My father worked as a tea garden worker and was the sole income earner for our family. There were times when we struggled to afford even a single day's meal. Although neither of my parents had the opportunity to receive formal education, my father firmly believed that education has the power to transform lives and only education could lift us out of poverty. His firm faith in the transformative quality of education became the cornerstone of my own aspirations and has guided every step of my education journey.

Educational resources were limited during my childhood. I still remember when my family could only afford to buy one newspaper in an entire week and I would read that one newspaper for the entire week. I can also recall the days when I often rode my bicycle to my friend Rana's house simply to read one newspaper (The Daily Star which comes with Magazines every Wednesday). Looking back, I now realise those small steps of determination were never just about learning English, they represent my undaunted desire to learn and my belief that only education has the power to create opportunities beyond my imagination. From those humble beginnings to pursuing a master's degree in New Zealand is a journey that still feels like a dream.

Those experiences shaped not only my education but also my passion for teaching. Teaching has always been more than a profession to me; it is my passion and my calling. Throughout this Master of Education programme at Auckland University of Technology (AUT), my journey took a shift from a teacher to a reflective practitioner, researcher, and an aspiring education leader. This degree has changed my perspective

of the way I think about education leadership, ethics, governance, and professional conduct, empowering my dedication to lifelong learning and to the education sector from a lens of integrity and compassion. I was equally overwhelmed by the learning environment at AUT. My university provided outstanding library facilities and resources, academic support services and a culture that genuinely enhanced curiosity, critical thinking, and independent research was something I had never experienced before. Hailing from a modest background where educational facilities were extremely limited, these opportunities were both humbling and encouraging.

My deepest reverence goes to my beloved parents, whose sacrifices made this journey possible. My mother's unconditional love, resilience, and encouragement, together with my father's unwavering faith in the power of education, gave me the strength to pursue opportunities they themselves never had. Every achievement in my life was founded upon their sacrifices.

I am sincerely grateful to my elder sister, a motherly figure in my life, (Gita Rani Kurmi) and my brother-in -law (Rejesh Lohar) whose support and encouragement shaped my future. My sister was the first person in our family to secure employment and helped our family to come out of extreme poverty. Their belief in my abilities gave me the opportunity to pursue my dream of studying abroad. I also thank my elder brother (Sanjay Kurmi) for his constant support throughout my personal and professional journey.

To my beloved wife, Punam Borma, thank you for your unconstitutional love, encouragement, and constant support. Undertaking this journey away from family would never have been possible without your encouragement, sacrifice, and belief in me. During the moments of uncertainty and challenges your faith and presence gave me strength and this achievement is as much yours as it is mine.

I wish to express my deepest reverence and appreciation to Dr Howard Youngs, my dissertation supervisor. I first met Dr Youngs in my first course EDLD811 ‘Conceptualisations of Educational Leadership' where his welcoming nature and genuine care for students made a lasting impression on me. The first journey which started in my first class in this country to mentorship of this dissertation influenced both my research knowledge and personal growth. There were moments when I doubted my abilities and could not find a way forward, he offered far more than academic guidance. He reminded me of the magical words of Psalm 32:8: “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on

you." His words of assurances and encouragement by saying "With God all things are possible" (Mathew 19:26). Those words restore my confidence and reinforce my belief that research can contribute to integrity, justice and positive change. I will ever remain privileged for his supervision, mentorship, kindness, and unwavering belief in me.

My sincere appreciation also goes to Melanie Drake, who was my 'EDLD803 Reflecting on Professional Practice as an Educational Leader' course instructor. Her warm, motherly nature laid a strong foundation for my academic journey.

I also extend my sincere gratitude and thanks to all my lecturers at AUT, my friends (Saju, Shiplu, Sanjib,) and everyone who encouraged me throughout this journey.

Finally, and above all deepest thanks to Almighty God (Lord Krishna). When I look back on my journey from childhood in a tea garden community to studying in New Zealand, it could have been possible by the grace of God. Every opportunity, every challenge overcome and every achievement has been possible through His Grace.

As this research relied solely on a Systematic Literature Review no ethics approval was required.

Chapter 1:

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This study examined how internal and external pressures shape the ethical challenges experienced by secondary school teachers in Bangladesh through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR). It primarily focused on how organisational cultures, administrative governance, corruption, political interference and ethics policies shape teachers' professional behaviour and moral decision-making. Understanding these underlying factors is essential for empowering professional ethics, educational leadership, and governance within the secondary education sector of Bangladesh.

1.2 Background and Rationale

Bangladesh has made a conspicuous progress in expanding access to education, with the secondary education sector playing a pivotal role in preparing the younger generation for higher education, employment and responsible citizens Kamruzzaman (2023, p. 14). Despite these developments, the evidence from reviewed studies identifies concerns associated with governance, accountability, corruption, political influence, and the implementation of professional moral standards within secondary schools. These dilemmas create perplexing professional environments in which teachers are expected to balance ethical practices with organisational and professional expectations.

From my professional experience as secondary school teacher in Bangladesh, I closely observed ethical dilemmas emerge from day-to-day interaction. These challenges are not necessarily from individual conduct or decision-making but from wider institutional and structural influences. These experiences informed my interest in understanding the underlying factors that shape teachers' moral behaviour. Existing literature, identified and screened through the systematic review protocol, has analysed issues relating to, educational governance, corruption, teacher professionalism, and educational leadership; however, these issues have been examined independently. Accordingly, there is paucity of evidence discussing how internal organisational influences and external systemic pressures influence the ethical dilemmas experienced by secondary school teachers in Bangladesh. Furthermore, relatively less attention has been given presenting

how effectively existing ethics regulations and governance structures are enacted to encounter these challenges. Addressing these gaps provides the rationale for undertaking this SLR.

1.3 Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this review was to investigate how internal and external pressures shape the ethical challenges experienced by secondary school teachers in Bangladesh through a systematic review of literature.

The review was guided by the following research questions:

1.How do corruption, political influence, and governance pressures shape the ethical challenges of secondary school teachers in Bangladesh?

2.How effectively do the existing ethics policies and governance frameworks address the ethical challenges faced by secondary school teachers?

1.4 Overview of Methodology

A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was adopted because it provides a rigorous, transparent and consistent approach to identifying, reviewing, and synthesising existing research. Guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework, the review systematically identified and evaluated relevant studies to develop an understanding of the ethical dilemmas faced by secondary school teachers in Bangladesh while reducing researcher bias.

1.5 Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation constitutes six chapters. Chapter Two presents the research methodology, Chapter Three outlines the conceptual perspectives, Chapter Four discusses the educational context of Bangladesh, Chapter Five analyses the findings of the systematic literature review, and Chapter Six discusses the findings, implications, recommendations, limitations, and overall conclusion of the study.

Chapter 2:

Methodology

2.1 Introduction

To understand the ethical dilemma faced by secondary school teachers in Bangladesh it needs to be considered through a social, political and organisational perspective in which they work. This study seeks to investigate how internal and external pressures shape the ethical decision making of secondary school teachers in Bangladesh with special attention to corruption, political influence, governance and professional experiences. It also intends to investigate the extent to which current governance policies and ethical frameworks address these challenges. For the complexity of the research gap and the necessity of synthesis of data from different sources a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was selected as the most appropriate methodological approach.

This chapter outlines the rationale for the adoption of a systematic literature review and explains the process employed to identify, select, analyse and synthesise appropriate literature. This review also describes the application of the PRISMA 2020 framework and presents the search strategy, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and selection process of study. Further explanation of methods used for data extraction and thematic analysis are also included in this chapter. The chapter also discusses the ethical considerations, the limitations of this study, and the measures taken to ensure methodological rigor and trustworthiness.

2.2 Research Design: Systematic Literature Review

This study adopted a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to examine the ethical challenges experienced by secondary school teachers in Bangladesh. A Systematic Literature Review provides a structured and transparent approach to identifying, evaluating and synthesising existing research relevant to research questions Kitchenham (2004). A systematic literature review approach ensures explicit procedures which enhance transparency, reduce selection bias and strengthen the credibility of the findings unlike transitional narrative reviews. This decision to employ an SLR was informed by the nature and complexity of the research problem. The ethical challenges faced by Bangladeshi secondary school teachers are interwoven with a range of interconnected factors, which includes corruption, political interference, organisational structures and institutional expectations. Research related to these factors is scattered across various fields,

such as and not limited to, educational leadership, ethics, governance and anti-corruption studies. For this reason, only relying on a single body of literature from one field might not provide complete understanding of the phenomenon. A systematic review therefore offers a more equipped understanding of the factors which influence teachers' ethical decision making.

A literature review should be recognised as a rigorous research methodology capable of generating new knowledge through the systematic synthesis of existing evidence (Snyder, 2019) . Unlike the summarising of previous studies, a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) helps researchers to pinpoint patterns, inconsistencies and gaps within literature.

For the nature of this research work, the Systematic Literature Review provided an opportunity to critically investigate how various forms of internal and external forces shape the ethical decision-making and professional exercises of the secondary school teachers in Bangladesh.

2.2.1 Ethical Considerations

This research was purely based on secondary data sources and did not have direct engagement of any human participation. Therefore, the formal approval of ethics was not needed. Nonetheless, ethical consideration remained essential throughout the research procedures. Special care was taken to accurately reference and acknowledge the findings of the authors whose work informed this study, following APA 7th guidelines. This study also ensures academic fairness through the transparent selection, synthesis, and reporting of literature and the findings were elucidated and present with at most responsibility to avoid misrepresentation or bias.

2.2.2 Limitations of the study

The research study has its limitations and have to be acknowledged. Firstly, the study solely relied on literature published in English, which might have excluded relevant studies available in other languages. Furthermore, the review was limited to and based on published research studies and therefore might not fully cover the recent experiences within Bangladeshi schools. Thirdly, despite careful and systematic search strategy, some related research studies might have been left unidentified. Finally, the review was bounded in terms of range due to needing to meet the word-length bounds that reflect a 60-point dissertation.

In operationalising these boundaries, search parameters were specifically restricted to four major databases: Google Scholar, ERIC, Scopus and Web of Science. Hand-searching of unindexed local institutional archives and Bangladeshi journals were not conducted due to the following operational parameter. The exclusion of non-English literature, while maintaining consistency in data synthesis, represents a recognised boundary regarding potentially relevant Bangla – language policy documents and local research.

2.3 Review Protocol and PRISMA Framework

To ensure transparency and uniformity throughout the research process, this research study utilised the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses (PRISMA 2020) framework developed by Page et al., (2021). The PRISMA framework presents internationally recognised guidelines for conducting and reporting systematic reviews. This framework is regarded highly and is widely accepted across diverse academic disciplines. The Systematic Literature Review (SLR) framework provides transparency, rigour and completeness in the review process (Booth et al., 2021; Gough et al., 2017; Page et al., 2021).

The PRISMA framework was also adopted because it provides structured approach in the documentation process which enables researchers to identify, screen and select for inclusion. This type of transparency is particularly needed for research which examines ethics, governance and corruption. This framework was also essential because of the availability and quality and quantity of findings. It was appropriate because not much literature was found, as limited research has been conducted on the ethical challenges encountered by secondary school teachers in Bangladesh.

This research study involved four distinctive stages: identification of the studies in accordance with their relevance, screening of the records, assessing studies against inclusion and exclusion criteria, the final selection of the findings for synthesis. The framework was essential in making sure that the decisions made throughout the review process were explicit and systematic. The selection process of the study is shown in the PRISMA 2020 flow diagram in Appendix 1.

2.4 Search strategy

A systematic search strategy was adopted in accordance with the research questions for the identification of the relevant literature. The search procedure was developed to ensure consistency, fairness and comprehensiveness to identify literature related to ethics, governance, corruption and the professional practices of teachers within secondary school context.

The search procedure involved four electronic databases: Google Scholar, Eric, Scopus, and Web of Science. The reason behind choosing these databases was that they provided the opportunity of accessing a wide range of educational leadership, governance and social science literature. Google Scholar was particularly essential for its additional coverage of interdisciplinary research and police-related publications, whereas Scopus provided access to high-quality peer-reviewed journal articles. Eric and Web of Science were also explored to ensure that relevant educational and social science literature were not overlooked.

The search process was primarily aimed at literature which was published between 2015 and 2025. This timeline was especially selected to capture contemporary debates, policy reforms, and governance challenges related to educational leadership, corruption, and teacher professionalism in educational context. This timeframe brings to light important developments in accountability frameworks, governance reforms and policy initiatives not only in Bangladesh but also internationally. Sources prior to 2015 were included only where they provided necessary conceptual or methodological contribution to the research work.

Search terms included Bangladesh, ethics, ethical decision-making, governance, corruption, teacher moral agency, educational leadership and secondary education. The usage of Boolean operators such as AND and OR were also important for refining searches and improving relevance.

Inclusion of search strings such as:

(“teacher ethics “OR “ethical challenges”) AND (“secondary school teachers”) AND (Bangladesh OR South Asia)

(“ethical decision-making”) AND (education) AND (governance OR corruption)

(“teacher moral agency”) AND (“educational leadership”)

("education corruption") AND (Bangladesh)

In the initial search process 147 records were identified across the selected databases. Following title and abstract screening, 85 records were excluded and 62 records were assessed for full-text eligibility assessment. Applying the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, 24 records were excluded. Finally, 38 studies were included in the final evidence synthesis (see Appendix 3).

2.4.1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Prior to screening, explicit inclusion and exclusion were developed throughout the review process for maintaining relevance and consistency. Literature were selected based on their focus on ethics, governance, corruption and ethical decision-making. It was also ensured that the studies were from an educational context and examined issues related to secondary school or secondary school teachers. The inclusion criteria also included studies based on the direct relation to Bangladesh to provide insights applicable to Bangladeshi educational context. Apart from that, peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, book chapters, and organisational reports were also considered on their eligibility which were available in English language.

The exclusion criteria focused extensively if the literature were focused on primary or higher education. The studies also excluded ones not related to ethics, governance, corruption, educational leadership, or teacher professional experiences and sources from newspaper articles, opinion articles and non-academic publications. Studies which were in other languages other than English were excluded due to operational scope and language parameters of this review. While this criterion-maintained consistency in data synthesis, it is recognised as a limitation regarding potentially relevant Bangla-language literature. Following these criteria helped to ensure that the selected studies remained closely related to aims and research questions of this review.

2.4.2 Data Extraction and Screening

This review followed a structured screen process for the selection of the studies informed by the PRISMA 2020 framework. For the organisation and reference management all the identified literature were imported to EndNote 21. EndNote 21 was also used to manage search databases, organise records according to screening categories, maintain records of inclusion and exclusion studies and provide overall support in the review procedure (see Appendix 2). To determine relevance to the research questions all the titles and

abstracts were screened. The studies which appeared relevant literature were further assessed in full text to examine their suitability for inclusion. The screened process focused on whether the studies address issues related to ethics, corruption, governance, educational leadership, ethical decision making. Special attention was given to literature which were related to secondary education and applicable to Bangladeshi context.

To ensure transparency across the review process, a data extraction table was developed. Information from each study such as the author, year of publication, geographical relevance, aim of research, methodological approach, and key findings in accordance with the research questions. A sample data extraction matrix is provided in Appendix 1. An EndNote 21 library screenshot, and PRISMA framework screening procedure are also presented in Appendix 2.

2.5 Thematic Analysis and Data Synthesis

The studies which were selected were analysed using thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). As stated by Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis follows six distinctive steps: familiarisation with findings, looking for patterns, reviewing and refinement of the themes and finding a coherence relationship with the findings. The adoption of this method was relevant because the research study included literature from various types of studies, for example, conceptual papers, documents from different organisations, policy documents, systematic reviews and empirical research. Thematic analysis provided a systematic way of identifying common patterns and themes across studies. In the first phase, careful reading of the studies provided a familiarity with the data. Key ideas and data related to ethical challenges, corruption, political interference, governance pressures, accountability and teacher professional agency were identified. In the subsequent phases, ideas and key concepts were grouped together into broader categories.

In the final stage, the refinement and review of these categories provided a means to develop key themes across the studies. These themes provided a framework which explained how internal and external pressures impact the ethical experiences of secondary school teachers in Bangladesh.

2.6 Rigour and Trustworthiness

This study adopted some measures to increase the rigour, fairness and trustworthiness of this review process. Firstly, the employment of systematic literature review methodology provided a systematic and transparent

way to identify, select and analyse relevant literature. The use of explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria decreased the chance of random study selection and increases consistency throughout the review process.

Secondly, the use of the PRISMA framework provided a lucid and transparent process of documenting the identification, screening and selection of studies. The framework also provided transparency which enables readers to understand how the final body of the studies was established and provides strength to the credibility of the review.

Thirdly, the usage of multiple database sources increases the breadth of the search procedure and reduces the risk of overlooking relevant studies. The employment of a structured data extraction table and EndNote 21 library further helped maintain consistency in reporting and synthesising documents across the review.

Finally, thematic analysis procedures increased the reliability of the sources by making sure the themes were grounded in evidence from relevant literature rather than summarising only from assumptions of researchers.

2.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter explained the methodological approach employed for the review. A systematic literature review informed by the PRISMA 2020 framework was adopted to examine how internal and external pressures shape the ethical decision making of secondary school teachers in Bangladesh. The explanation of research design, search strategy, selection of the literature, data extraction procedure, thematic analysis approach and measures taken to increase rigour and transparency have been outlined in this chapter.

Chapter 3:

Key Concepts

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the key concepts that are foundational to the SLR and chapters that follow. To understand how internal and external pressures shape the ethical challenges of Secondary School teachers in Bangladesh, two broad concepts are discussed; school leadership and ethics. School leadership, for the purpose of this chapter covers positional leadership, teacher leadership and governance. School leadership has been shown to be a significant influencing factor on teacher practice (Gumus et al., 2018; Leithwood et al., 2020; Lipscombe et al., 2023; Özdemir et al., 2024). The sub-section on ethics is broken down into ethical leadership, ethical decision-making, teacher ethics, moral agency, and ethical challenges which may occur in educational institutions. Ethics is discussed as a key concept due to it having a significant profile in the research questions.

This chapter lays the foundation of this study for understanding how organisational practices, governance structures, ethical dilemmas and professional attributes influence teachers' ethical domain within educational settings. Ethical dilemmas are not the result of individual decision making and actions only, rather these dilemmas or challenges uprise through practices of institutional cultures, leadership practices, organisational expectations and wider governance structures. This chapter also provides an analytical lens for chapters 4 and 5.

3.2 School Leadership

School Leadership has been widely considered as an essential factor in impacting school effectiveness, organisational culture and professional practice (Gumus et al., 2018; Hallinger & Kulophas, 2022). Meta-analyses point out that leadership influences not only student outcomes but also the professional environment within which educators work (Leithwood et al., 2020; Özdemir et al., 2024). School leaders, contribute to the establishment of organisational morality, behavioural structures and decision-making processes which influence the regular practice within educational organisations (Hallinger & Kulophas, 2022; Leithwood et al., 2020). Consequently, leadership plays a significant role in finding out how schools respond to

challenges, maintaining accountability and upholding ethical behaviour (Hallinger & Kulophas, 2022; Lipscombe et al., 2023).

The contemporary understanding of school leadership expands beyond the boundary of administrative management and organisational control. Leadership is seen as a process of influencing that supports collaboration, professional learning and overall school improvement (Gumus et al., 2018; Leithwood et al., 2020). Hallinger and Kulophas (2022) point out that effective school leadership helps in the creation of a positive learning atmosphere by establishing clear motives, supporting teachers and upholding institutional transparency. Likewise, Gumus et al.'s (2018) review of school leadership research shows it influences school culture through relationships, expectations and professional attributes. While Gumus et al. (2018) highlight the impact of leadership on school culture, Brown and Trevino (2006) argue that ethical leadership is characterised by transparency, integrity and ethical behaviour. Branson and Gross (2014) suggest that the school leaders play a significant role in maintaining school cultures which support ethical practices. Leadership influences not only school development but also the ethical atmosphere in which teachers uphold their professional responsibilities.

3.2.1 Positional Leadership

Grint (2010) conceptualised leadership as a concept which can be understood through diverse perspectives, which includes leadership as position, person process and result. From this perspective, positional leadership is defined as leadership practiced through formally designated positions and responsibilities within an organisation hierarchy, where authority and responsibility are determined through an individual's formal position within the institution. Principals and other formal leaders hold roles which give authority for making decisions, allocation of resources and influence institutional direction. Leaders in these positions establish school goals, oversee policies and ensure that organisational objectives are achieved. According to Hallinger and Kulophas (2022), school leaders play a vital role in establishing long term goals, supporting mentoring and learning and giving direction to the organisational culture. Such leaders, through their authority and decision-making abilities, influence the priorities and exercises of educational institutions.

Gumus et al. (2018) suggest the necessity of leadership in promoting school development and fostering environments that support professional engagement and learning. Successful leaders create an environment

where teachers feel heard and supported, valued and inspired to engage in professional improvement. Such leaders also play a key role in addressing organisational challenges and encouraging a positive atmosphere within schools.

Positional leaders, include both senior and middle leaders, who impact institutional values and ethical expectations through their decisions, practices and good communication. Their leadership vision contributes to maintaining the ethical environment of educational organisations and influences how teachers understand their professional responsibilities and institutional expectations (Ahmed, 2025; Lipscombe et al., 2023). Leaders who demonstrate, transparency and accountability help to foster trust, strengthen professional relationships and encourage ethical behaviour among staff (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Lipscombe et al., 2023). On the contrary, ineffective or unethical leadership can weaken the organisational trust, reduce professional confidence and contribute to moral tension within educational institutions (Ahmed, 2025). Therefore, positional leadership plays a pivotal role in understanding how ethical practices are upheld or challenged within schools.

3.2.2 Teacher Leadership and Non-positional Leadership

Leadership within educational settings is not limited to formal leadership. Therefore, educators identified the necessity of teachers and other forms of non-positional leadership (Pan et al., 2023; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Teacher leadership emerges when leaders encourage colleagues, contribute to school development and support institutional visions without necessarily holding formal leadership positions (De Nobile, 2023; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). This point of view recognises that leadership can occur through expertise, professional relationship and collaborative practices rather only through conventional authority (De Nobile, 2023; Wenner & Campbell, 2017).

Leadership can be understood as a relational and values-based procedure as well as a function of formal authority (Branson & Gross, 2014). This perspective points out that leadership is practiced through mutual interactions and collaboration which encourage collective goals and professional growth. Consequently, teachers could demonstrate leadership by guiding colleagues, sharing expertise and contributing to the decision-making process within the school environment.

Similarly, Courtney et al., (2021) argue that leadership occurs through professional relationship, collaboration and shared responsibilities. Leadership is therefore decentralised across individuals rather than centralised solely within formal leadership roles. This concept challenges and complements the conventional hierarchical models of leadership and emphasises the necessity of collective responsibility for school for school development and institutional effectiveness.

Teacher leadership is particularly essential when considering moral practice as teachers often impact organisational culture through day-to-day interactions and professional behaviour. Experienced teachers within schools may take the responsibility to act as a role model in guiding novice colleagues and contribute to the improvement of professional attributes. Research on teacher leadership suggests that teachers can contribute to the professional learning of colleagues, inspire collaboration and support school development without necessarily holding traditional leadership positions (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). These practices and activities help teachers shape the values and expectations that encourage ethical norms within the school environment.

Non-positional leadership also prioritises the decentralised nature of responsibility for maintaining moral standards in educational institutions. This type of leadership suggests that leadership responsibilities go beyond the boundary of formally nominated leaders. Leadership practices within schools are not confined to top-down leaders such as principals; rather senior teachers and other staff members can practice leadership through their expertise, collaboration and influence (De Nobile, 2023). This point of view highlights the importance of shared responsibility collective commitment for maintaining professionalism and ethical standards within the stakeholders of the school community.

3.2.3 Governance

Governance can be defined as the formal and informal structures, policies, relationships and procedures through which educational organisations are directed, regulated and held accountability (Wilkins & Gobby, 2021). Rather than relying only on systematic or administrative arrangements, governance covers the ways in which governments and non-government organisations how educational institutions and individuals conduct themselves (Wilkins & Gobby, 2021). It also refers to the framework in which leadership and institutional decision-making occur. Timely and effective governance upholds transparency, accountability and fairness,

on the contrary fragile governance might create an environment which promotes unethical practices and undermines public trust (Hallak & Poisson, 2001).

Governance plays an effective and important role in education since schools operate within a wider policy and regulatory atmosphere. Education leaders are expected to lead in accordance with the governance framework established by governments, education authorities and organisational policies. These frameworks influence the decision making, resource allocation and accountability of schools for their performance. According to Wilkins and Gobby (2021) governance shapes educational leadership by establishing accountability relations and performance expectations which impact how schools are managed and evaluated.

Hallak and Poisson (2001) suggest that governance failure can pave the way for corruption, favouritism and misuse of power. These practices weaken organisational integrity and result in affecting education quality and equity. Effective leadership and governance therefore need lucid policies, transparent processes and structures which uphold accountability at all levels of the education system. However, governance is related to mechanisms such as performance monitoring and external evaluation and accountability systems which seek to improve educational quality and organisational effectiveness (Wilkins & Gobby, 2021). Collectively, these perspectives highlight that governance extends beyond administrative compliances to foster the institutional environment through which ethical leadership, accountability and professional behaviour are either strengthened or limited within schools.

In the context of Bangladesh, governance has become a pivotal issue in discussions of quality of education and organisational effectiveness. Governance challenges constantly affect public institutions, including educational institutions (Rashid & Johara, 2018). Challenges related to accountability, transparency and administrative effectiveness have implications for not only leadership practices but also professional behaviour.

Governance frameworks therefore play a pivotal role in moulding institutional expectations and encouraging ethical practices within schools. These structures affect how leaders practice authority, how teachers carry out their responsibilities and how ethical issues are solved within educational settings. Governance and educational leadership are closely interconnected since leadership exercises are shaped by wider political,

social and accountability issues (Wilkins & Gobby, 2021). Therefore, an understanding of governance is essential for analysing the ethical challenges experienced by secondary school teachers in Bangladesh.

3.3 Ethics

Ethics refers to the principles, values and moral standards that guide human behaviour and decision-making. In educational settings ethics provides a framework for asserting what constitutes appropriate, responsible and professional behaviour. Educational organisations are not the places for learning but also ethical communities where policies affect learners, teachers, families and overall, the broader community. Therefore, ethical considerations are at the epicentre of educational practices and leadership (Ahmed, 2025; Puyó, 2022).

Education is inherently linked to moral and social values because it seeks to develop individuals who can contribute positively to society (Peters, 2015). Strike and Soltis (2015) emphasise that teaching involves continuous ethical judgement, as leaders regularly make decisions which influence students' learning, wellbeing and opportunities. For this reason, ethical practice expands beyond the boundary of set rules and regulations and needs consideration of transparency, justice and professional responsibility. According to Puyó (2022) ethical practices in educational institutions should be informed by morale of care, justice and critique whereas Ahmed (2025) prioritises the necessity of value-based leadership and professional responsibility in educational settings.

3.3.1 Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership is regarded as an essential perspective in leadership studies since it focuses on morality, transparency and ethical conduct. Conventional leadership practices often prioritise institutional performance and effectiveness, unlike ethical leadership which upholds the importance of moral values and ethical conduct in leadership practices. Educational leaders are expected to not only achieve organisational visions but also achieve those goals by means of morally responsible and socially acceptable ways. Brown and Treviño (2006) present ethical leadership as the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through individual actions, interpersonal relationship relationships-making process. Ethical leaders act as ethical individuals and ethical managers (Brown & Treviño, 2006). As moral human beings they show empathy,

integrity, fairness, trustworthiness and concern for fellow human beings. As ethical managers, they actively uphold moral behaviour by effective communication, collaboration and institutional practices.

According to Banks et al. (2021), ethical leadership cultivates positive organisational results by fostering mutual trust, accountability and moral behaviour among colleagues. Likewise, Göçen (2021) asserts the role of ethical leadership in fostering institutional cultures consider not by in the result transparency and professional commitment. These attributes are especially important in educational institutions since leaders in such organisations not only influence organisational procedures but also the values and behaviour of teachers and students.

Branson and Gross (2014) further argue that education leadership should be defined as a moral endeavour which is grounded in moral values and human relationships. The leaders in educational settings have the responsibility of fostering an atmosphere which supports professional honesty, responsibility towards society and ethical decision-making. Education leaders, by their actions and decisions, create an ethical environment within schools and encourage how issues related to ethics are addressed and interpreted.

The research of Ahmed (2025), Arman and Azam (2025) and Puyó (2022) further emphasise the necessity of ethical leadership in upholding accountability, trust and organisational integrity. By establishing clear expectations in terms of professional behaviour and contributing to an environment, ethical leaders encourage ethical conduct and discourage misconduct. Therefore, ethical leadership provides an essential framework for understanding how leadership shapes teachers' practices and addresses ethical challenges.

In the context of Bangladesh ethical leadership might be especially necessary in encountering challenges related to governance, accountability and professional behaviour. School leaders play a pivotal role in the establishment of moral expectations and in the support of teachers in addressing complex professional situations. Ethical leadership therefore presents an important lens for understanding how organisational atmosphere shapes moral practices within schools.

3.3.2 Ethical Decision-Making

Ethical decision-making is a concept of professional practice because teachers constantly face complex situations which need a balancing approach between moral values, responsibilities and expectations. In educational institutions, decisions often have a significant impact on learners, colleagues and broader school community. Therefore, ethical decision-making requires more than simply following rules or policies; it

takes professional judgement, critical reflection and consideration of the potential influence of actions on others.

According to Önen and Tibet (2020), ethical decision-making is a procedure through which educators identify ethical issues, initiate possible courses of action and choose responses which are pertinent to moral principles and professional standards. This procedure needs people to consider not only the result of their decisions but also the values and responsibilities which guide their professional attributes in the procedure. For this reason, ethical decision-making has a combination of both rational analysis and ethical reasoning.

In the context of education, ethical challenges often rise when moral values seem equally important. For example, educators might need to balance transparency and consistency with empathy and flexibility when dealing with students. Similarly, school leaders may encounter dilemmas between the need for accountability and the needs of teachers and learners. Strike and Soltis (2015) suggest that these dilemmas rarely have clear or straightforward solutions, which makes ethical decision-making an important factor of professional practice.

Finefter-Rosenbluh (2016) argue that ethical decision-making is encouraged by institutional culture, professional relationships and organisational expectations. Decisions are not made without context but are shaped by the atmosphere in which educators work. There are some factors such as school policies, leadership attributes and governance structures which can impact on how moral dilemmas are understood and addressed. Therefore, ethical decision-making should be conceived as both a personal and institutional process.

The complexity of ethical decision-making is especially pertinent within the contemporary educational settings where governance structures, accountability mechanisms and transparency requirements increasingly influence professional practice (Hallak & Poisson, 2001). Teachers might encounter issues in which professional conduct contradicts institutional needs or external or internal expectations. Therefore, moral decision-making becomes important for maintaining professional honesty and making sure that educational practices remain aligned with ethical principles.

In the context of Bangladesh, ethical decision-making may be further complicated by governance challenges, weak accountability mechanisms and broader institutional pressures (Rashid & Johara, 2018). Educators and school leaders might come across situations where professional conduct contradicts with organisational

expectations and wider social influences. For this reason, knowledge of ethical decision-making gives an essential insight into how leaders address ethical challenges and respond to complex professional situations.

3.3.3 Teacher and Moral Agency

Teaching is widely considered as a moral profession since teachers influence not only students' academic improvement but also their personal, social and ethical development (Peters, 2015; Strike & Soltis, 2015). For this reason, teachers are expected to show high standards of professional behaviour and make decisions which uphold the wellbeing and the best interest of their students (Strike & Soltis, 2015). Therefore, ethics in teaching practices become an essential component of educators (Peters, 2015; Strike & Soltis, 2015).

Teachers have a moral obligation to demonstrate integrity, care, fairness and respect in their day-to-day interaction with students and colleagues (Strike & Soltis, 2015). Educators need to consider the impact of their decisions and actions and demonstrate conduct which upholds professional values. Similarly, Peters (2015) argues that education is conventionally concerned with ethical development and responsibility towards society and makes ethical decisions in relevance with educational practices.

Reflective practice is an aspect of teacher ethics. According to Schön (1983) individuals improve their practices through reflection prior to and after actions. Reflection allows teachers to critically analyse their decisions, assess their response to challenges and develop greater awareness of the moral decisions of their work. Education leaders become more equipped to encounter complex dilemmas and address the professional challenges.

The argument by Larrivee (2000) emphasises the necessity of critical reflection. According to Larrivee (2000), leaders or teachers should move from the limitations of technical practices and critically question their assumptions and analyse the values and power structures that influence their professional behaviour. When educators reflect critically, it encourages them to consider how institutional expectations, organisational policies and social context shape their decisions and actions.

The concept of moral agency further adds to the understanding of teacher ethics. Moral agency is defined as the capacity of individuals to act ethically and make ethical judgement according to their values and principles. Teachers exercise professional judgement and make decisions which influence students and learning outcomes (Strike & Soltis, 2015).

Teacher moral agency is especially necessary since leaders often face issues which involve competing responsibilities and ethical uncertainty (Strike & Soltis, 2015). Teachers must balance between the needs of learners, institutional expectations and professional conduct while initiating their commitment to moral practices (Strike & Soltis, 2015). Teacher ethics and moral agency, therefore, gives us an essential perspective for understanding how leaders encounter ethical challenges within schools.

3.3.4 Challenges to Ethical Practices

Although ethical leadership, moral decision-making and teacher moral agency are essential for upholding ethical practices, leaders may encounter situations which make it difficult to maintain ethical behaviour. These dilemmas may arise from institutional pressures, governance failure, requirement of accountability and wider social and political influences. Consequently, ethical challenges cannot be understood only through individual responsibility but must also be analysed within the broader working environment in which educators work.

According to Hallak and Poisson (2001), corruption is one of the most significant obstacles to ethical practices within educational settings. Corruption works as a threat to transparency, fairness and accountability and influences decision-making procedures, allocation of resources and professional relationships. Such unethical practices make mutual trust fragile in educational organisations and lead to an environment where moral practices may be compromised. Choe et al. (2013) argue that weak organisational structures, excessive red tape and informal networks create environments which allow corrupt exercises prevail within the educational sector. These practices may persistently create pressures that contradict personal values and moral responsibilities. Such dilemmas might influence institutional cultures and impact on how ethical challenges are addressed within schools.

According to Mugellini et al., (2021) corruption is influenced by organisational cultures, governance structures and professional values. Their systematic review highlights that strengthening governance mechanisms along with organisational and cultural reforms can contribute to reducing corruption and upholding ethical practices. Educators and education leaders working in such an atmosphere may nevertheless face ethical dilemmas which ultimately influence their decision-making and professional attributes.

In terms of Bangladesh, governance and challenges related to accountability have been recognised as continuous concern within public organisations which includes education. Rashid and Johara (2018) highlight that concern related to transparency, accountability and administrative effectiveness constantly affecting institutional performance. However, according to, Rashid and Johara (2018), the Government of Bangladesh has implemented various initiatives for strengthening governance and promoting integrity within public services. However, the implementation of such policies leave space for complexity and are often influenced by broader social and political factors.

According to Sayfullooh et al. (2023), corruption takes multimoded forms across different levels of education and wider education systems, with bribery being one of the most cited forms. Their review argues that encounters with corruption need attention in relation to different contexts and organisational settings. For this reason, teachers and school leaders may find themselves in a difficult environment where professional and moral values contradict themselves with institutional practices or internal and external pressures.

These ethical challenges highlight the necessity of considering ethical practice as a complex and context-dependent process. Ethical behaviour is shaped not only by personal values and professional conduct but also by organisational cultures, governance structures and wider institutional conditions. Reflection on these challenges and dilemmas provides a broader insight on the ethical challenges experienced by secondary school teachers and informs the discussion of Bangladeshi teachers in the conclusion chapter.

3.4 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the key conceptual understandings that inform this study of the ethical challenges and dilemmas experienced by secondary school teachers and how these may be applied to Bangladesh. The study explored school leadership through positional leadership, teacher leadership and governance, and discussed ethics in terms of ethical leadership, ethical decision-making, teacher ethics and moral agency. The chapter also discussed how governance challenges, organisational pressures and corruption may weaken ethical practice.

The key understanding from literature is that ethical challenges should not be considered as the outcome of individual actions. Rather, they arise from the personal interaction of leaders, institutional and structured

factors. Leadership, governance and organisational norms help how ethical dilemmas are experienced and encountered and make ethical decision-making both in an individual and contextual procedure.

The literature highlights that ethical attributes are shaped by not only individual values but also by governance structures, accountability mechanisms and wider socio-political context. Consequently, ethical dilemmas often reflect organisational conditions rather than individual behaviour only. This also regenerates the interconnection between leadership, governance and ethics.

This chapter introduced the conceptual framework that informs and frames this study. These conceptual understandings lay the foundation for the subsequent chapters. The data and findings of this SLR are examined in the following chapter through the key features related to ethical challenges experienced by secondary school teachers in Bangladesh.

Chapter 4:

The Bangladeshi Secondary Education Context: Governance, Leadership and Ethical Practice

4.1 Introduction

The chapter of this Systematic Literature Review (SLR) presents the conceptual foundation for understanding the ethical challenges experienced by secondary school teachers in Bangladesh. Drawing on the conceptual understandings of Chapter three of school leadership, governance and ethics, this chapter examines those concepts within the administrative, governance and professional context of the secondary education system of Bangladesh. This context is essential because teachers' ethical behaviour is shaped not only by their personal conduct but also by the organisational structures and governance arrangements which influence professional responsibilities (Wilkins & Gobby, 2021).

The secondary education system of Bangladesh is administered centrally in which educational governance, policy implementation and school administration are collectively influenced by the Ministry of Education, the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE), the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), and School Management Committees (SMCs) (See figure 1)

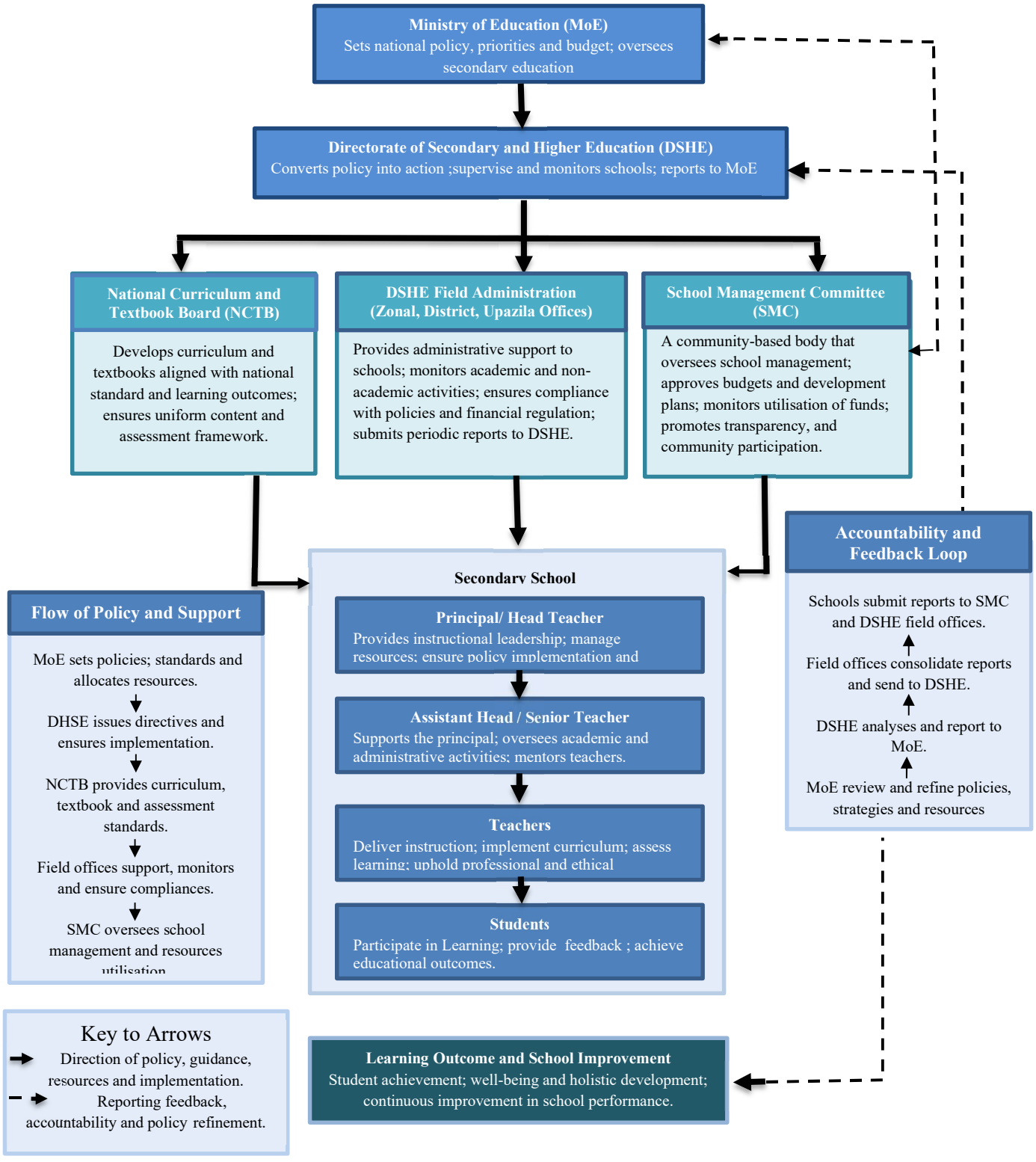


Figure 1: How the Secondary Education System of Bangladesh Operates. (My personal diagram based on Secondary Education System of Bangladesh)

These governing structures provide institutions provide the supervisory environment that determines teachers' professional responsibilities, accountability mechanisms and leadership expectations (Haque et al., 2024; Kamruzzaman, 2023; Ministry of Education, 2010). Although these structures are expected to administer effective educational governance, international studies highlight that the implementation of policy is influenced by local organisational perspective and the discretionary steps of those liable for putting policy into practice (Hudson et al., 2019). This point of view establishes an essential conceptual lens for understanding how governance structures operate within the secondary education system of Bangladesh.

This chapter examines the secondary education context of Bangladesh across three interconnected structures. This chapter first presents the administrative and supervisory framework which governs the secondary education system. Secondly, it discusses governance, leadership and organisational accountability within schools before examining the professional and ethical expectations entrusted upon the secondary school teachers of Bangladesh. Collectively, these sections provide the contextual foundation for Chapter five, which synthesises the literature on how internal and external pressures shape the ethical challenges faced by secondary school teachers in Bangladesh.

4.2 Administrative and Regulatory Framework of Secondary Education

The administration of secondary education of Bangladesh is characterised by a centralised structure in which the Ministry of Education (MoE) owns the overall responsibility for formulation of policy, systematic planning and supervisory oversight. Through this highly centralised hierarchical structure, National education policies are materialised into administrative guidelines which direct the operation of government and non-government secondary schools across the country (Kamruzzaman, 2023). The National Education Policy (NEP) (Ministry of Education, 2010) strengthened the state's responsibility for ensuring equitable access to quality education by establishing national priorities for development of curriculum, teacher education, organisational management and quality of education. From a governance point of view, these administrative structures reinforce mechanisms through which the State shapes the direction of educational institutions and professionals in pursuit of national educational objectives (Wilkins & Gobby, 2021). Whereas these arrangements establish a comprehensive monitoring framework, international studies highlight that policy outcomes are also shaped by the institutional contexts and the process of implementation by which policies are enacted (Hudson et al., 2019).

The Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) is the core authority responsible for implementing government policies across the secondary education sector. Operating under the Ministry of Education, the DSHE monitors school administration, teacher management, organisational supervision and educational oversight. The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) is responsible for curriculum development and the production and distribution of national textbooks, whilst the Non-Government Teachers' Registration and Certification Authority (NTRC) controls the recruitment and certification of teachers for non-government secondary schools with aim of ensuring greater fairness and transparency in teacher recruitment. Moreover, the National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM) provides the professional development of educational leaders and administrators by providing in-service training programmes (Kamruzzaman, 2023; Rahman et al., 2018). Collectively, these state agencies determine the allocation of responsibilities between formulation of policy, implementation and the strengthening of professional capacity in the secondary education settings of Bangladesh.

The secondary education system of Bangladesh constitutes three main streams: general education, madrasa education and technical and vocational education, each regulating within the same supervisory framework while serving diverse educational purposes (Mousumi & Kusakabe, 2021). Although most of the secondary schools are established through private funding, many function under the Monthly Pay Order (MPO) scheme, through which the Government subsidies teachers' salaries while maintaining monitoring oversight of related agencies. Therefore, the MPO system conveys an essential governance structure which enables the state to extend policy direction, financial accountability and assurance of quality across a predominantly non -government secondary education sector (Kamruzzaman, 2023).

The National Education Policy (Ministry of Education, 2010) identifies secondary education as an important stage for producing intellectual, skilled and ethically responsible citizens who are capable of contributing to the development of a nation. To accomplish these objectives, the policy determines expectations related to implementation of curriculum, quality of teachers, organisational management and opportunity for equitable access to education. Consequently, the administrative structure extends beyond the limitation of organisational management to establish the supervisory environment in which educators and school leaders are expected to accomplish their professional responsibilities. From a conceptual perspective, these governance structures establish the organisational environments through which national educational objectives are materialised into school-level practice. As Hudson et al., (2019) highlight, however, the

effectiveness of policy consequently depends on how the implementation takes place within grass root level organisational settings, establishing the bridge between design of policy and the enactment of policy while making an essential consideration when examining educational governance.

Overall, the administrative and supervisory framework in the secondary education system of Bangladesh resonates with a heavily centralised system within which responsibilities for policy development, educational administration, curriculum development, teacher appointment and professional development are distributed across specialised national agencies. This structure outlines the organisational context in which school governance, leadership and teacher professionalism are managed. It also lays the foundation for the following sections, which examines how governance and accountability structures are established within secondary schools' shape educational leadership and organisational practice.

4.3 Governance, Leadership and Institutional Accountability

Governance within the secondary educational settings of Bangladesh is administered through a multi-level structure which interconnects the national education policy with school level administration. The Ministry of Education is responsible for direction of policy, and the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) observes implementation, whereas responsibility for the day-to-today governance of individual schools is shared among headteachers, School Management Committees (SMCs) and local level education agencies. Collectively, these frameworks are expected to ensure that schools operate in accordance with the national regulations at the same time ensuring quality of education, administrative accountability and effective organisational management (Haque et al., 2024).

At the local level, District Education Offices, Upazila Secondary Education Offices and Upazila Academic Monitors play pivotal supervisory roles within the governance structures. Haque et al., (2024) describe these authorities as responsible for supervising school performance, supporting teachers, making sure they operate in accordance with government regulations and providing academic and administrative oversight. They are responsible for not only inspection but also include professional guidance, school supervising and quality assurance, making an essential connection between centrally developed educational regulations and their implementation within schools.

School Management Committee (SMCs) represent another essential factor of school governance. Formalised under national regulations, SMCs are entrusted to coordinate with school management, oversee financial and

institutional management, make important contributions to strategic planning and encourage community engagement in school decision-making. As Mousumi and Kusakabe (2021) highlight, the engagement of community representatives resonates with the Government's intention to equip local accountability while remaining aligned with the priorities of national education policy. Together, these governance structures establish systematic mechanisms through which accountability is strengthened by making an intentional link between the State, schools and local communities.

Within this governance structure, the headteacher has the responsibility of being the main instructional and administrative leader accountable for implementing Government policies, monitoring teachers and supporting school operations. As well as these administrative duties, successful school leadership also engages in supporting teachers' professional development, upholding collaboration and an organisational culture which encourages ethical professional behaviour. Brown and Treviño (2006) highlight that leaders contribute to upholding institutional integrity by representing themselves as ethical role models who reinforce professional expectations through their decisions, communications and accountability practices. Although Brown and Treviño (2006) key points originated outside of Bangladesh, they establish an important lens for understanding the leadership responsibilities expected within secondary schools.

The recruitment of teachers within non-government secondary schools is initiated through the Non-Government Teachers' Registration and Certification Authority (NTRCA), which is expected to maintain greater consistency, transparency and merit-based appointment practices. In collaboration with the oversight responsibilities of the DSHE and local education offices, these structures provide the legal accountability mechanisms through which standards of education are expected to be maintained. However, the effectiveness of governance structures depends not only on the proficiency of policy design but also on how policies are interpreted and implemented within local level grass root level organisational settings (Hudson et al., 2019). Therefore, the implementation of governance and accountability mechanisms may differ across schools despite the prevalence of common national regulations.

In essence, the secondary education system of Bangladesh embodies a comprehensive governance framework which incorporates central policy direction, school-level leadership and external accountability mechanisms. Whereas, these frameworks provide clear responsibilities for educational leadership and institutional oversight, their implementation ultimately depends on how governance mechanisms are enacted in schools. This context lays an important contextual foundation for Chapter five, which examines how

internal and external pressures shape the implementation of these governance mechanisms and contribute to the ethical challenges experienced by secondary school teachers in Bangladesh.

4.4 Professional and Ethical Expectations of Secondary School Teachers

The professional and ethical responsibilities of secondary school teachers in Bangladesh are primarily determined through the National Education Policy (NEP) (Ministry of Education, 2010) which defines teachers as primary force to the development of the nation and the cultivation of human values. The policy identifies teachers as key stakeholders in developing intellectual, skilled and ethically responsible citizens while maintaining the promotion of inclusive and equitable access to education irrespective of students' socio-economic, cultural or religious belongings. Beyond encouraging academic achievement, teachers are expected to maintain professional integrity, practice moral values and contribute to the cultivation of responsible citizens through their professional practice (NEP) (Ministry of Education, 2010).

Within the secondary schools of Bangladesh, professionalism extends beyond the limitations of curriculum delivery to encompass ethical conduct, engaging in continued professional learning and commitment to education development. The NEP (Ministry of Education, 2010) positions the expectations from teachers to maintain professional compatibility, work for the improvement of their knowledge and skills throughout their teaching careers and respond promptly to the diverse learning needs of students. It also expects school leaders to cultivate ethical and moral behaviour to lead the way of professional conduct and strengthen public confidence in the teaching profession. These policy expectations place professionalism as both a professional and ethical responsibility, reinforcing that successful teaching requires not only subject knowledge and pedagogical expertise but also integrity, fairness and accountability.

International studies likewise prioritise that teaching is an ethical profession which needs informed professional judgement. According to Strike and Soltis (2015) teachers possess specialised professional knowledge which enables them to make critical educational decisions in situations where competing values and responsibilities may arise. They further argue that ethical behaviour requires teachers to achieve a procedure of reflective equivalence by tactfully balancing professional expectations while consistently behaving to the best interests of the students. These concepts resonate with the aspirations of the National Education Policy (Ministry of Education, 2010), by establishing a conceptual perspective of how professional behaviour compliments ethical education practice.

The reviewed literature further highlights that the professionalism of educators is shaped not only by individual conduct but also by the organisational atmosphere in which teachers operate. Rahman (2019) suggests that teacher development in Bangladesh has conventionally remained a certificate- based rather than skilled-based approach, giving greater priority on academic qualifications than on providing conspicuous professional practice and leadership attributes. Likewise, Debnath (2026) and Hossain (2017) argue that emphasis for teacher leadership is constrained with a heavily top-down administrative framework, overlooking teachers' capacity to collaborate meaningfully in school decision-making and practice professional agency beyond their boundary of prescribed responsibilities.

Overall, the National Education Policy (Ministry of Education, 2010) and revised literature provide a clear professional and ethical structure for secondary school teachers in Bangladesh. Teachers are supposed to maintain integrity, fairness, accountability, constant professional development and commitment to students' learning needs while remaining aligned with the broader national objectives. International scholarship on conceptual perspective further highlights that professionalism needs ethical behaviour at the same time equipped with technical competence. Collectively, these policy expectations and conceptual understandings establish the professional and ethical foundation across which Chapter five analyses how internal and external pressures shape the ethical challenges faced by secondary school teachers in Bangladesh.

Chapter 5:

Ethical Challenges Faced by Secondary School Teachers in Bangladesh

5.1 Introduction

Chapter four discussed the context in which secondary school teachers in Bangladesh accomplish their professional responsibilities in accordance with the administrative and monitoring structure, governance frameworks, leadership structures, and the professional and ethical expectations established through national policy and the reviewed literature. Collectively, these frameworks and structures set the standards where teachers are expected to uphold accountability, professionalism and ethical education environment within the secondary educational settings. In these settings, teachers' professional practice is shaped by a complex interaction of organisational, political, economic and socio-cultural pressures. Rather than considering ethical challenges as an isolated issue of individual conduct, the reviewed literature highlights the necessity of understanding the institutional contexts in which teachers operate and the broader governance frameworks which influence professional decision-making. A critical reflection on these interconnected factors establishes a more extensive understanding of how ethical challenges emerge and perpetuate within the secondary education system of Bangladesh.

Examining the findings of the SLR, this chapters presents synthesised evidence from relevant research related to the ethical challenges faced by the secondary school teachers in Bangladesh. This chapter has four interrelated sections: (1) the first focuses on the challenges local schools experience and the following three themes build on this (structural corruption, politicised governance and organisational accountability); the three themes are, (2) Bureaucratic leadership, organisational culture and professional agency; (3) Professional ethics, economic pressures and the commercialisation of teaching; (4) Ethical misconduct and compromised educational integrity. Simultaneously, these themes analyse how internal and external pressures influence teachers' ethical decision-making and professional behaviour, drawing on the analytical foundation for addressing the research questions of this SLR.

Figure 2 illustrates how the three themes, identified through the thematic analysis of this SLR, are conceptually interconnected. Section 5.2 presents the foundational context by illustrating everyday dilemmas faced by secondary school teachers in Bangladesh. Drawing on this foundation, Sections 5.3 5.4 and 5.5

examine the organisational, economic and ethical dimensions that influence teachers' professional decision-making and ethical practice. Collectively, these interrelated themes establish the analytical framework for explaining the findings and addressing the research questions of this Systematic Literature Review.

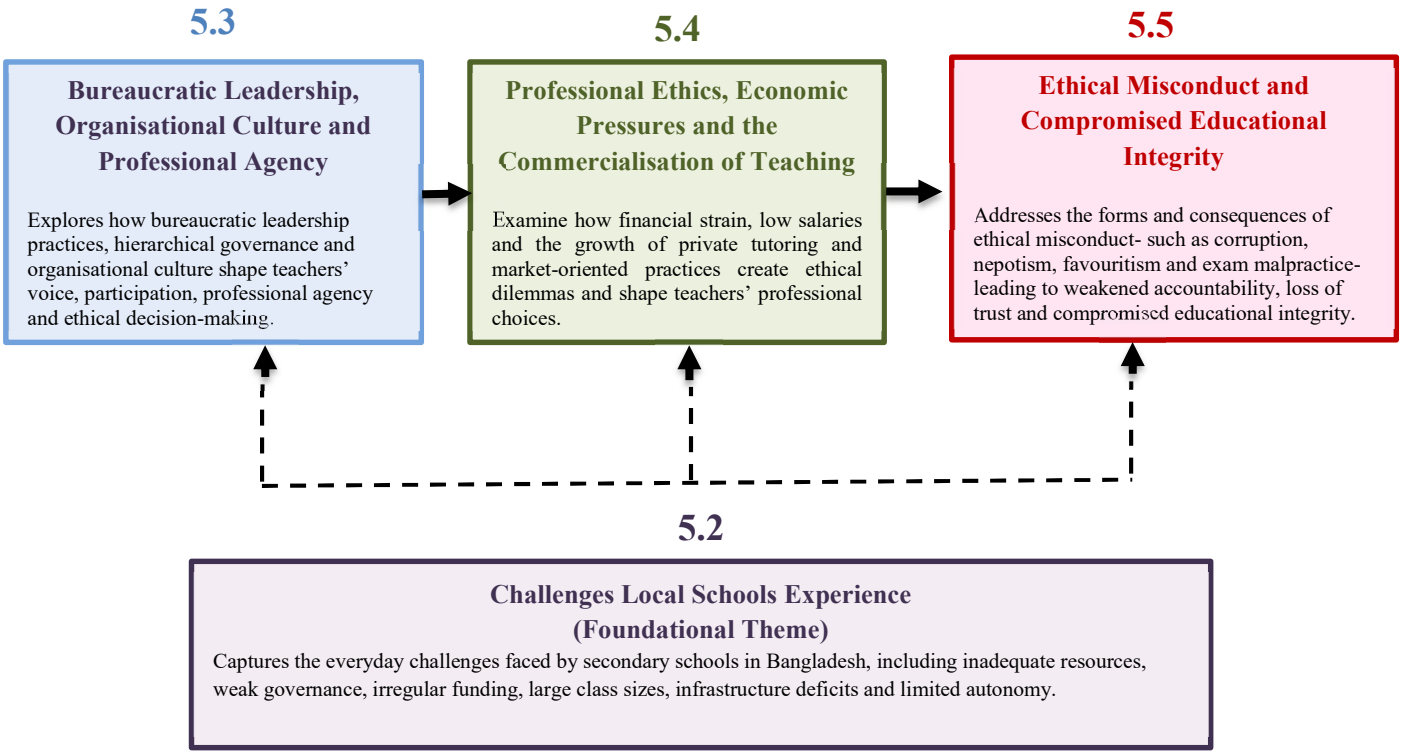


Figure 2: Interrelation of Themes in Analysing Ethical Challenges in Secondary School in Bangladesh

5.2 Structural Corruption, Politicised Governance and Institutional Accountability

Systematic corruption and politicised governance influence the ethical challenges experienced by secondary school teachers in Bangladesh. Corruption is presented as a structured governance condition woven into administrative processes, political interference and organisational practices, rather than viewing it as an isolated issue of individual misjudgement. The reviewed literature identified that ethical challenges occur not because teachers make unethical choices, but they operate within governance structures where bureaucratic discretion, fragile accountability frameworks and political influence constantly shape professional decision-

making (Bangladesh, 2022; Choe et al., 2013; Debnath, 2026; Hossain, 2017). Therefore, teachers often need to compromise organisational expectations while balancing between professional and ethical standards.

Empirical evidence for this pattern is established by Transparency International Bangladesh's (2022) National Household Survey (2021), which describes corruption sustained within regular educational administration. The survey highlights bribery and unauthorised payments (16.87%) as the most regularly practiced form of corruption, which follows official procedures. This survey report indicates that governance problems extend beyond financial irregularities to wider administrative misconduct. Furthermore, the survey highlights that the secondary education sector accounts for 38.09% of all reported corruption victims, which is the highest number among government education services. Corruption was identified across multiple administrative procedures, for example, admissions, examination registration, certification, stipend administration and private tutoring, recognising that unethical conduct has become a part of regular educational administration rather than exceptional events. Respondents reported paying bribes because services were inaccessible without payment, to avoid administrative longevity or because administrative processes lacked transparency. These practices illustrate how organisational structures themselves create environments which result in patronise unethical behaviour.

Choe et al. (2013) drawing on a quantitative study analysis of 3,636 households across 62 districts, found that both the incidents of corruption and worth of bribes increase alongside executive complexity or 'red tape', which is suggestive that bureaucratic processes create conditions for discretionary decision-making and unethical payments. Their statistical analysis demonstrated that corruption discrepantly affects individuals with comparatively limited financial or political resources whereas individuals with better social connection can navigate or exploit administrative structures through informal networks. The authors concluded that these patterns contributed to unequal access to education services. Collectively, these findings suggest that corruption prevails as a structured form in educational governance, creating uneven access to education services while frequently encouraging unethical pressures faced by teachers and school community.

Political interference is cited as a second interconnected factor of governance failure. Hossain (2017), in a case study prepared for the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, highlights an impaired political and administrative culture within the education system of Bangladesh. His case study suggests that this culture has created "a sense of mistrust among the citizens towards the Government" (p.289). Citing Al Mamun's (2014) qualitative case study of School Management Committees (SMCs) in Gouripur Upazila,

Mymensingh, Hossain (2017) argues that they are often dominated by "political muscled people" who are supposed to strengthen community engagement and organisational accountability, are constantly dominated by politically patronised individuals whose influences extend beyond educational development. Rather than operating only as mechanisms of imperial oversight, politically influenced SMCs are reported to influence recruitment, resource allocation and school decision-making in favour of local political interests.

Hossain (2017) also suggests that "nepotism and political affliction are common and influence the recruitment and training processes of teachers" (p.298). Mulcahy (2015) similarly notes that effectiveness of SMCs is political interference, drawing on a national household survey in which 77% of participants identified nepotism in the education sector as a major concern and argued that the effectiveness of SMCs had been impaired by political influence in their authoritarian, decisions and operation. Hossain (2017) drawing on Al Mamun's (2014) qualitative case study, further highlights that teachers "bribe their monitoring officers to have satisfactory remarks and fill the evaluation forms by themselves instead of the AUEO[Assistant Upazila Education Officer]" (p.8), demonstrating how supervisory procedures themselves become affected to unauthorised intervention, only adding to weakening the institutional accountability and decreasing confidence in governance structures. Similar evidence from Hossain (2017), Mulcahy (2015) and in particular Debnath's (2026) qualitative interviews with five secondary school teachers from public and private secondary schools in the Dhaka district, highlight political influences not only endanger organisational transparency but also contributes to additional ethical pressures for teachers, who must often compromise professional integrity with local political interests. One respondent reported that professional endeavours were "obstructed by the religio-political power existing in this country" (Debnath, 2026, p.59).

Hossain's (2017) and Rashid and Johara' (2018) findings further resonate that weaknesses in organisational accountability create conditions in which governance failures become difficult to address. Mousumi and Kusakabe (2021), in a case study of education governance in Bangladesh, report that financial oversight within the secondary education system is undermined by substantial delays in audit follow-up, with unfinished audit supervision insisting for extended periods. Their case further demonstrates how administrative processes regarding salaries, pensions and other professional entitlements may encourage unauthorised payments to provide regular services. "Nothing that teachers were often required to pay bribes for administrative services such as certificate attestation, leave adjustment and pension processing" (p.458).

In addition, with the evidence of deliberate nepotism in teacher recruitment highlighted by Mulcahy (2015), drawing on evidence from a national household survey and sectoral corruption, 77% of household survey participants identified nepotism in teacher recruitment as a major unethical practice and reported that aspirants were often expected to pay bribes during the recruitment process. Collectively, these findings illustrate that weaknesses in accountability mechanisms reduce transparency, affect merit-based professional structures and contribute to an organisational culture in which unethical payments may become normalised.

Although the secondary education system of Bangladesh possesses a comprehensive formal governance framework, the findings describe that institutional implementation remains disparate. For instance, Hossain (2017) argues that although educational administration has been decentralised through successive legislative revisions, these reforms "could not bring any significant outcomes" (p.289) because of a defective political and administrative system. Haque et al., (2024) clearly demarcate governance responsibilities ascertained across the Ministry of Education, the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education, district education offices, headteachers and School Management Committees. Likewise, the Ministry of Education (2010) establishes expectations relating to transparency, accountability and effective educational leadership which includes the objective of "accountability, dynamism and transparency at all levels of educational administration" (p.64) to make the system smoother and corruption free. However, when these formal governance frameworks are considered alongside the reviewed evidence found by Transparency International Bangladesh (2022) the national household survey analysed by Choe et al.,(2013), the UNESCO country case study by Hossain (2017) and the education governance case study by Mousumi and Kusakabe (2021), a clear imbalance emerges between policy intentions and governance practices. For example, Choe et al.(2013), citing on data from 3,636 households across 62 districts, identified that bribery increased alongside administrative "red tape" whereas Mousumi and Kusakabe (2021) note that audit follow-up in the secondary education sector was delayed by an average of 10 years. Formal accountability frameworks exist, yet these studies indicate political influence, bureaucratic discrepancy and irregular institutional oversight constantly limit their usefulness in reality. Debnath (2026) in her interviews with five secondary school teachers in Dhaka, had one respondent describe the institutional culture as one where "might is right" (p.57) demonstrating that governance weaknesses are present at the school level.

Overall, the findings from reviewed literature describe that systematic corruption, politicised governance and weak organisational accountability are collectively components of secondary education governance in

Bangladesh. Rather than presenting only governance failure, these institutional environments mutually shape the moral atmosphere in which teachers conduct their professional responsibilities. The synthesis therefore highlights that developing teachers' ethical behaviour needs not only strengthening individual professional morality but also addressing the wider governance frameworks which shape accountability, transparency and professional decision-making across the education system.

5.3 Bureaucratic Leadership, Organisational Culture and Teachers' Professional Agency

The reviewed literature identified that bureaucratic leadership and organisational culture create comprehensive internal pressures which influence the ethical challenges experienced by secondary school teachers in Bangladesh. The formal governance framework is expected to establish accountability and effective school administration, however, evidence from Hossain's (2017) UNESCO country case study, which analysed accountability and governance across the education system of Bangladesh and Debnath's (2026) qualitative study of five secondary school teachers from public and private secondary schools in Dhaka district suggest that leadership practices within most of the schools remain highlighted by hierarchical decision-making, limited opportunity for teacher participation and centralised governance control. Hossain (2017) argued that the education system of Bangladesh is characterised by a "highly centralised and rigid bureaucratic" (p.11) administrative structure, while teachers interviewed by Debnath (2026) demonstrate schools in which new professional ideas were rarely welcomed. These organisational structures constantly limit teachers' professional agency and minimise opportunities for meaningful collaboration in school decision-making, rather than encouraging professional participation and ethical leadership.

The strongest empirical evidence for these organisational constraints is provided by Debnath's (2026) qualitative study, which demonstrates the secondary education system of Bangladesh as conducting within a highly centralised and bureaucratic framework where school leaders operate primarily as implementing authorities responsible for ensuring they are in line with the directives issued by top-down administrative levels. In this governance structure, teachers have limited scope to influence school development or engage in institutional decision-making. Teachers participating in the study describe how their professional insights were frequently undermined within school decision-making. As Teacher 1 explained "The schools are

bound to follow all Government regulations. opinions are not welcomed if they are very new. I would say it's an indulgence of the convention" (Debnath, 2026, p.58). The study further highlights that the five teachers constantly experienced leadership behaviour characterised by bossism behaviour, where professional viewpoints may be ignored, dismissed or discouraged. Teacher 1 reflected: "Whatever I tried to do. My principal imposed his bossy attitude. Things do not change if Principal disagrees" (p.59). Similarly, Teacher 3 observed: "If a teacher wants to do their best. principals take it for granted, as long as the decision benefits them personally" (p.59). Participants in this study describe a school environment in which administrative authority undermines professional reflection, with Teacher 1 explaining: "I am allowed to speak. But I could hardly find that any of my proposals were accepted and enacted. I feel very insulted" (p.57).

Consequently, organisational administration remains centred within formal leadership positions, constraining teachers' ability to practice professional expertise and participating meaningfully in school improvement. These teachers' accounts are in line with Hossain's (2017) wider analysis that school leaders operate as implementing agencies with a highly centralised hierarchical governance structure, constraining opportunities for distributed leadership and professional autonomy.

The findings further highlight that these bureaucratic leadership frameworks influence the organisational environment within schools. Debnath (2026) reports that teachers faced professional grudges, an "intriguing" workplace environment and limited mutual trust, which created organisational situations that undermined collaboration, innovation and teacher leadership. Teacher 2 described colleagues as "my worst challenges", explaining that "they would never allow me to stand out. They are alert to find fault with nothing else!" (p.57). Another respondent also reported that heavy workload demotivates collaboration, stating, "I have so many classes. and I am left with no energy or interest in spending time on collaborative learning. there is no extra room for this practice" (p.57). These organisational mechanisms often discourage teachers from expressing their professional viewpoint or involvement in development for fear of criticism and conflict, rather than encouraging shared responsibility. This pattern also resonates with Ooi and Ismail's (2026) systematic review of 74 Asian studies, which notes that teacher agency is frequently limited by "high power distance" and "rigid hierarchical structures" (p.3), and that sustainable school improvement depends on improving "relational trust and collective harmony" between school leaders and teachers (p.1).

Furthermore, Haque et al., (2024) in their policy review of the legal framework governing secondary education in Bangladesh, suggest that "the success of strategic plans and supervision systems also relies on

the cooperation and commitment of school leadership" (p.106). Their analysis identifies that headteachers as key actors function not only as internal leaders but also as essential gateways between schools and external accountability mechanisms. Together, these findings from Debnath (2026), Hossain (2017), Ooi and Ismail (2026) and Haque et al., (2024) resonate with institutional systems characterised by hierarchical authority, limited mutual trust and constraint engagement decrease opportunities for collective decision-making, professional learning and ethical reflection within the school environment.

Debnath (2026) reports that teachers are constantly discouraged from discussions relating to school reform, organisational reforming and institutional development despite their direct interaction in classroom practice. The findings from this study further suggest that limited opportunities for promotion and career progression leave many teachers remaining in the same position for longer periods, discouraging motivation to take greater leadership responsibilities. Likewise, the Ministry of Education (2010) establishes teachers' professional responsibilities but provides limited explicit determination of teacher leadership or collaborative decision-making, focusing greater priority on administrative framework and formal responsibilities of school leaders. Collectively, these findings resonate that leadership practices remain centred within hierarchical organisational structures, overlooking teachers' opportunities to participate in institutional leadership beyond their regular responsibilities in the classroom.

The findings of the SLR also highlight the implications of these institutional situations for teachers' professional identity and ethical standards. Evidence from Debnath's (2026) qualitative study highlights that outreach bureaucratic control, uncertain career progression and limited professional recognition contribute to decreased professional agency and demotivation among teachers. On the other hand, institutional environments demotivate participation and impartial professional judgement, encouraging teachers to priorities administrative compliance over professional improvement and ethical leadership. As Debnath (2026) reports citing Hossain (2017), an exploratory study of principals in school and colleges in Bangladesh found that approximately 39% of school principals exhibit insufficient leadership qualities characterised by bureaucratic management, top-down authoritarian administration, unwilling to practice distributive leadership and limited recognition of teachers' informal leadership roles. Collectively, these findings from Debnath (2026), Hossain (2017), Ahmed (2025), Ooi and Ismail (2026) highlight that both leadership attributes and organisational culture have a direct influence on teachers' capacity to exercise professional judgement, collaborate in school leadership and uphold ethical responsibilities within secondary schools.

Overall, the findings of Debnath (2026), Hossain (2017), Haque et al.,(2024), Ahmed (2025) and Ooi and Ismail (2026) describe that bureaucratic leadership, hierarchical organisational environments and constrained teacher engagement are significant internal pressures which influence teachers' ethical experiences within the secondary schools settings in Bangladesh. The organisational framework of secondary schools of Bangladesh, as reflected in national governance studies (Haque et al., 2024; Hossain, 2017), and teachers' experiences (Debnath, 2026), reinforce administrative compliance, top-down decision-making and limited professional agency, rather than encouraging collaborative professional learning and shared leadership. The synthesis of reviewed literature therefore suggests that strengthening teachers' ethical practices requires not only effective governance but also institutional environments which uphold professional mutual trust, meaningful collaboration, leadership development and ethical leadership throughout the school community. This finding is also supported by Ahmed's (2025) systematic review, which identifies ethical leadership as associated with teachers' voice behaviour, and Ooi and Ismail's (2026) review, which emphasises mutual trust and collaborative leadership as important components for strengthening teacher agency within hierarchical educational systems.

5.4 Professional Ethics, Economic Pressures and the Commercialisation of Teaching

The reviewed literature suggests that economic pressures and the commercialisation of education represent significant ethical challenges for secondary school teachers in Bangladesh. Although teaching is conventionally regarded as a sacred profession founded on a "sacred relationship" (Mulcahy, 2015, p. 14), between teachers and students, and grounded in "compassion caring virtue" (Mulcahy, 2015, p. 14), professional integrity and a commitment to students' best interest, the findings highlight that financial uncertainty, inadequate remuneration and the rapid expansion of private tutoring have continuously blurred the boundary between professional responsibility and economic survival. These ethical dilemmas seem to emerge from wider systemic and economic situations which shape teachers' professional practice, rather than reflecting it as individual ethical choices.

Empirical evidence for these challenges was established by Alam and Zhu's (2023) qualitative study of 18 participants, including six teachers, six students and six parents from two urban public collages in Sylhet and Sreemangal, who report that the six teachers interviewed engage in private tutoring because their official

earnings are inadequate to meet basic household expenses. One teacher explained, “If he has hunger in his stomach, what will he teach?” (p.264), describing how financial uncertainty shapes teachers’ professional decisions. Teachers rely on private tutoring as a financial necessity driven by rising living costs, limited salary increase and family responsibilities. Similarly, Hera’s (2020) policy brief, citing secondary evidence from the education sector of Bangladesh, highlights that paucity of finance has made the education sector more penetrable to financial exploitation. Hera (2020) notes that teachers are “compensated financially through private tutoring” and, in most cases, becomes less dedicated to their regular professional responsibilities (p.7). Mulcahy’s (2015) national governance review, drawing on household survey data and previous research, notes that private tutoring is an essential supplementary source of income for teachers. Student points of view reported by Alam and Zhu (2023) demonstrate the commercialisation of teaching, with one student explaining that “teachers would write their cell phone number on the board and instruct students to call them if they needed tutoring” (p.268), which is suggestive that private tutoring had become embedded within regular educational procedure. Citing BANBEIS national education statistics, Alam and Zhu (2023) further report that Bangladesh allocated approximately 1.54% of its GDP (11.42% of the national budget) to education, a level which is considered substantially below international benchmark. Mousumi and Kusakabe (2021) also highlight that although the Monthly Pay Order (MPO) system subsidies around 90% of the teachers' salaries, schools must ensure the remaining funding through their own endeavour, adding to more financial pressure within the secondary education system. Alam and Zhu (2023) further suggest that significant discrimination in remuneration and allowances between government and non-government (MPO) teachers, and Debnath;s (2026) qualitative study identified that the uncertainty of promoting facilities and revised pay scales contributed to professional discouragement. As Teacher 5 explained, “I have been working in the same post for 13 years without any promotion... It's demotivating for me” (p.59). Together, these studies suggest that economic pressure is not only an individual stress but a systematic situation that influences teachers’ moral decision-making and professional practice.

The reviewed literature including Alam and Zhu (2023), Choe et al., (2013), Mulcahy (2015), Hera (2020), Sayfullooh et al., (2023) and Kamruzzaman (2023) also indicates ethical tension regarding the commercialisation of teaching. Alam and Zhu’s (2023) qualitative study identified several techniques used by some teachers to artificial need for private tutoring, which includes deliberately leaving parts of the school curriculum unfinished, hampering the quality and pace of classroom instructions, providing personal

contact details on classroom board to encourage students, and using practical examination marks to attract participating in paid coaching. These practices were identified across interviews of teachers, students and parents (Alam & Zhu, 2023). Teachers also demonstrated that ever growing examination pressures related to the SSC (Secondary School Certificate) and HSC (Higher Secondary School Certificate) examinations, together with teachers' responsibility for practical assessments create opportunities to influence students' decision to seek private tutoring. As Teacher T5 explained, “In the case of science subjects, they are bound to study with their own college teachers. As they want to ensure their practical examination marks” (Alam & Zhu, 2023). Moreover, participants reported facing expectations from colleagues, relatives and family members to engage in tutoring because it had become a regular, socially accepted and financially desirable conduct. One Teacher T4 explained, “My wife often asks me, ‘Why do you not tutor students when everyone else is doing it?” (p.449). Rather than considering it as an isolated unethical practice, these findings from qualitative interviews and policy reviews suggest that economic and examination pressures and prevailing social concepts related to normalise private tutoring within parts of the secondary education system.

The reviewed literature further describes that these norms have essential impacts for educational quality and equitable distribution of education. Choe et al.’s (2013) quantitative analysis of 3,636 households across Bangladesh notes that households were substantially more likely to face unauthorised payments when teachers encouraged or compelled students to engage in private tutoring, reporting that approximately 32% of rural students and 31% of urban students received tutoring from their own class teachers (p. 241), whereas Transparency International Bangladesh (2022) reported that corruption related to coaching and tutoring continued to affect 13.55% of education service users. Alam and Zhu (2023) also report that students and parents interviewed in their qualitative study describe the continued dependence on examination-centered coaching, hints and predicted examination questions rather than reflective classroom learning, leading students towards a shift from educational environment to examination performance only. Similarly, Emran et al. (2013) highlight that unethical education payments place an unexpected burden on comparatively poorer households, highlighting that “bribe taking by teachers in schools affects poor households disproportionately. the poor pay more as a share of their income” (p.2), indicating that existing education inequalities restrain equitable access to education. Citing the findings from the national CAMPE (2018) Education Watch survey, Alam and Zhu (2023) report that approximately two-thirds of secondary students in Bangladesh no longer consider their teachers as ethical role models, while almost half of the teachers themselves do not

perceive they serve as moral role models. These findings of reviewed literature suggest that the commercialisation of teaching no longer remains an individual ethical issue but represents a systematic challenge weakening public trust in teachers and endangering the professional integrity expected within secondary education systems.

The literature further resonates that existing policy addressing has only limited success. The National Education Policy (Ministry of Education, 2010) identifies concerns related to private tutoring and attributes its expansion to the "erosion of moral values of a section of the teaching community" (p.11). The Ministry substantially introduced regulations on teachers providing tuition to their own students; moreover, the evidence synthesised from Alam and Zhu's (2023) qualitative study, along with Mulcahy's (2015) national governance review, these steps have had no conspicuous effect on teachers' tutoring practices because the structural and economic conditions encouraging private tutoring remain largely unchanged. Similarly, Hera's (2020) policy review argues that insufficient education budget and low teacher remuneration continue to make the education sector vulnerable to financial exploitation, while Kamruzzaman's (2023) review suggests concern associated with teachers' coaching businesses despite existing policy regulations. Consequently, policy interventions have concentrated primarily on restricting teachers' conduct, while providing comparatively less attention to increasing teacher remuneration, education financing and the institutional atmosphere which contribute to reliance on private tutoring.

In essence, the findings from Alam and Zhu (2023), Choe et al., (2013), Emran et al., (2013), Mulcahy (2015), Hera (2020), Transparency International Bangladesh (2022) and the Ministry of Education (2010) describe how financial uncertainty, insufficient remuneration and the commercialisation of teaching create ethical challenges for secondary school teachers in Bangladesh. Although many teachers justify private tutoring as an essential requirement for financial survival, the literature suggests that these practices create conflicts of interest, undermine equitable access to education and public confidence in the teaching profession. Collectively, these findings highlight that these ethical dilemmas are not the consequence of teachers' individual professional conduct but arise from the interaction between underinvestment, examination-oriented accountability structure, weak organisational regulation and wider governance frameworks. Overall, the synthesis of literature indicates that addressing these ethical dilemmas needs a systematic approach that requires stronger regulations. For example, sustainable education financing, improving teacher remuneration, strengthening institutional accountability and ensuring an atmosphere

which fosters ethical practice and appear essential for encouraging teachers to practice their professional conduct without worrying too much about commercially driven educational practices.

5.5 Ethical Misconduct and Compromised Educational Integrity

A manifestation of this ethical degradation is the jeopardising of assessment and examination integrity. The findings identify a string of unethical behaviour that overlooks fairness and transparency in assessing student achievement. Choe et al., (2013) note that the manipulation of oral and practical examination marks has become a regular practice within some secondary schools, whereas Alam and Zhu (2023) identified that teachers in most of the cases used practical examination marks as a source of inspiring students to engage in paid private coaching. In these situations, students' achievement assessment shifts from its expected educational goals of assessing students' learning progress to becoming a tool for financial profit and professional advantage. The reviewed literature further highlights events in which students who participate in private paid coaching receive special attention during assessment, depriving students of equitable educational privileges and creating question marks on the fairness of examination outcomes (Alam & Zhu, 2023; Choe et al., 2013). These findings resonate with assessment systems that may be compromised and commercialised, with educational flourishment increasingly affected by economic capacity rather than academic competence.

The findings also suggest that wider examination procedures are vulnerable to moral misconduct. Persistent examination question leaks continue to undermine the credibility of examinations despite revised supervisory measures to prevent such unethical practices (Hera, 2020; Kamruzzaman, 2023). Citing a policy brief which synthesised government reports, organisational publications and media reports, Hera (2020) highlights that despite government strict regulations, “examination papers are still leaked and circulated among students online every year before board exams and entrance exams” (p.7). The use of digital communication has further intensified examination questions papers being publicised before board and entrance examinations, indicating the incompetency of monitory responses that have concentrated primarily on administrative regulations rather than addressing the systematic conditions which sustained unethical practices. Collectively, these conducts erode confidence in examination systems and diminish public confidence that educational outcomes reflect genuine academic performance.

Apart from assessment practices, the findings suggest greater forms of professional unethical practices related to misuse of teachers' power and professional responsibilities. Teachers are in a position of public

trust which needs unbiased, fairness and the emphasising of students' educational requirements. However, the reviewed literature highlights that this practice of power may at times be used for exploitation for personal gain through partiality, conflicts of interest and the abuse of professional discretion. The literature also documented the serious form of unethical behaviour which includes sexual exploitation associated with academic preference and the breaching of sacred relationship between teacher and student (Mulcahy, 2015). Mulcahy's (2015) helpdesk research report for Transparency International synthesised data from newspaper reports, organisational publication and previous academic studies, identifying sexual exploitation and "paying for grades with sexual favours" (p.11) as a major form of educational corruption. Although the reviewed literature identified incidents of this nature less frequently than other forms of misconduct, they present the breaching of professional morality and describe the extent to which associated authority may be exploited when effective accountability mechanisms are absent.

The reviewed literature by Choe et al., (2013), Emran et al., (2013), Transparency International Bangladesh (2022) and Mulcahy (2015) further highlight that corruption, and immoral practices disproportionately disadvantage students from comparatively lower socio-economic backgrounds. Drawing on a quantitative analysis of 3.636 households across Bangladesh, Choe et al., (2013) identified that comparatively poorer households and households headed by less educated members were vulnerable to educational corruption. Likewise Emran et al. (2013) report that bribery in education places a disproportionate financial burden on poorer households. The students from these backgrounds are less likely to participate in paid private coaching or satisfy unethical financial demands related to educational privileges. Therefore, educational outcomes are the stake of becoming ascertained by financial capability rather than academic excellence, overlooking the moral of fairness, impartiality, and equitable access to educational privileges.

The reviewed literature suggests that unethical practices of professional authority may lead to serious consequences for student wellbeing. Choe et al. (2013) illustrate the widely reported incident of a young student who committed suicide following corporal punishment in the educational institutions of Bangladesh. Although this incident appears as an exceptional case rather than a recurring pattern across the reviewed literature, it demonstrates the potential devastating consequences that might lead to if professional authority is practiced without appropriate ethical judgement, care or accountability. This concern is further reinforced by Alam and Zhu (2023), citing the national CAMPE (2018) Education Watch survey reporting that "nearly half of the teachers felt they were not role models for their students" (p.459). Collectively, the evidence of

manipulation of student assessment, examination misconduct and the misuse of professional power, these instances describe how moral failures may overlook not only education achievement but also student well-being, public trust, and legitimacy of the education system itself.

Overall, the reviewed literature demonstrates that unethical behaviour represents the collective consequence of governance weaknesses, institutional environments and economic situations analysis through this chapter. The manipulation of student assessment, misuse of professional authority, degradation of teachers' ethical capacity and decadence of public trust describes that ethical dilemmas ultimately compromise the credibility of the secondary education system itself. Therefore, to address these organisational constraints requires not only individual professional endeavour but also stronger governance, ethical leadership, transparent accountability mechanisms and organisational atmosphere which encourage ethical behaviours across the secondary schools of Bangladesh.

5.6 Chapter Summary

The synthesis identified several interconnected themes. Firstly, weak governance structure, political influence and corruption were identified to undermine transparency, accountability and ethical administration within secondary schools. Secondly, the bureaucratic nature of leadership practices and unsupported institutional culture which constrain teachers' professional agency and decrease opportunities for ethical leadership and reflective discussion. Thirdly, economic difficulty, insufficient remuneration and the rapid popularisations of private tutoring add to the commercialisation of teaching, which contradicts teachers' professional obligations and financial uncertainty. Finally, these systematic, institutional and economic survival were the components which shape professional misconduct, malpractice in students' assessment, misuse of professional authority and the degradation of educational morality and public confidence.

Collectively, the findings describe those ethical challenges in secondary school settings of Bangladesh should not only be considered as individual attributes but arise from the interaction between individual, organisational and structural influences. The findings further resonate that addressing ethical behaviour needs a comprehensive measure that strengthens governance, leadership, organisational culture and environment where teachers operate along their professional responsibilities. This reflection is persistent with the conceptual perspectives examined in Chapter three, which prioritises that ethical conduct is

influenced not only by personal ethical judgement but also by leadership, organisational frameworks and wider policy conditions. Overall, this chapter establishes an evidence base for the recommendations discussed in the next chapter. Addressing the main ethical dilemmas and their contributing components, the synthesis suggests the necessity for collective reforms which strengthen ethical leadership, improve governance and accountability mechanisms, increase professional support for teachers and reinforce educational morality in the secondary school settings of Bangladesh.

Chapter 6:

Discussion, Implications and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the reviewed literature presented in chapter five by elucidating their wider importance within the conceptual framework established in Chapter Three. Integrating together the conceptual foundation discussed in Chapter Three, the governance and policy context analysed in Chapter Four, and the thematic findings synthesised in Chapter Five, this chapter interprets the ethical challenges experienced by secondary school teachers in Bangladesh. The purpose of this chapter is to shift beyond descriptive synthesis to critically analyse what these findings synthesised from the reviewed literature discuss about educational leadership, governance, professional morality and organisational culture within the secondary school system of Bangladesh. The findings presented across the reviewed studies examine how governance structures, leadership attributes, organisational culture and economic situations interact to influence teachers' professional decision-making and ethical practices. Rather than discussing each ethical dilemma separately, this chapter examines the integrity-governance-corruption nexus as a structure for discussing the interconnected nature of ethical challenges within secondary education.

The conceptual structure introduced in Chapter three placed ethical leadership, accountability, professional morality and teacher agency as foundational characteristics of successful educational organisations. Likewise, Chapter four discussed the governance frameworks, policy structures and professional expectations expected to uphold ethical behaviour within the secondary education settings of Bangladesh. Moreover, the thematic analysis presented in Chapter Five identifies a substantial gap between these regulative expectations and the reality faced by many secondary school teachers. Rather than considering separate incidents of personal unethical conduct, the literature identified that ethical challenges are influenced by broader structural, institutional and economic situations which shape teachers' ability to practice professional and ethical responsibilities. Collectively, the reviewed literature highlights the existence of a policy-implementation gap in which expectations for ethical and professional practice are not encouraged by the organisational and institutional environments required to enable them. These systematic conditions also influence teachers' professional practice and identity, constraining their ability to exercise ethical judgement and fulfil the professional expectations outlined in Chapter three.

Although the reviewed literature identified significant ethical challenges, the findings also show opportunities for strengthening ethical practices within secondary schools. Drawing on data synthesised in Chapter five, this discussion examines how collaborative organisational cultures, evidence-based leadership and supportive institutional environment may strengthen teachers' professional agency and ethical behaviour. Rather than considering these challenges insurmountable, the discussion illustrates the reviewed evidence to identify realistic opportunities for improving leadership, governance and practice within the secondary education system of Bangladesh. Accordingly, this chapter adopts a constructive perspective by considering both the challenges and the opportunities identified across reviewed studies discussing their implications for policy, leadership and professional practice.

The chapter comprises five sections. The first section critically analyses the reviewed literature by connecting the findings of the conceptual foundations discussed in Chapter three and examining the relationships among the four themes identified in Chapter five. The second presents the implications of these findings for educational leadership, governance, policy and professional practice in Bangladesh. The third section explores opportunities for strengthening ethical behaviour through evidence-informed leadership and institutional measures. The fourth discusses recommendations that arise from the reviewed literature whereas the final section concludes the chapter by highlighting the overall contribution of the study and its implications for future research, policy and practice.

6.2 Discussion of the Findings

6.2.1 Revisiting the Conceptual Foundations: The Gap Between Ethical Expectations and Professional Reality

The conceptual perspectives discussed in Chapter three established ethical leadership, professional morality, accountability, teacher agency and good governance as the fundamental ethics underpinning successful educational organisations. Collectively, these concepts prioritise that educational leaders should uphold ethical organisational cultures, encourage transparency and fairness, support teachers' agency, and foster situations which ensure ethical decision-making. Similarly, teachers are presented as professionals expected to act in the best interests of their students while inspiring integrity, unbiased and professional responsibility in their regular practice. These conceptual frameworks establish the conceptual base for analysing the ethical

challenges experienced by secondary school teachers in Bangladesh and informed explanation of the findings presented in Chapter five.

Chapter four further describes that these ethical expectations are woven within the governance frameworks, policy regulations, and professional standards expected to guide secondary education in Bangladesh. National education policy places teachers as moral professionals whose responsibilities have greater impact which is not limited to classroom instructions because it also includes the exercise of integrity, professionalism and equitable access to educational privileges. Collectively, the reviewed literature illustrates a substantial policy-implementation gap in which the ethical expectations enunciated through national education policy are not consistently facilitated by the governance frameworks and organisational environments essential for their enactment.

The explanation challenges the assumption that ethical behaviour can be ensured through professional expectations alone. Although teachers are expected to exhibit a high level of professionalism and ethical conduct, the findings indicate that teachers abstain from practicing their professional judgement in a vacuum of personal choice. Their professional behaviour is influenced by broader structural, organisational and economic situations that either support or discourage ethical practices their ethical practices. Governance structures, leadership practices, organisational cultures and broader socio-economic conditions collectively shape teachers' professional decision-making, which often constrain their capability to enact the ethical standards established within national policy. Moreover, ethical dilemmas should be considered within the wider organisational and institutional perspectives in which teachers operate rather than being based on attributed individual moral failings.

The findings of Chapter five illustrate the relationship between governance, leadership and professional morality are both interconnected and cumulative. The governance structures influence leadership attributes, leadership practices shape organisational culture, and organisational culture subsequently affects teachers' professional and ethical behaviour. From this point of view, the four themes highlighted in Chapter five should not be viewed as separate ethical conduct but as interconnected components of a broader organisational system. Rather than operate independently, systematic corruption and politicised governance weaken institutional accountability; bureaucratic leadership and inhibitory organisational conditions constrain professional agency; economic instability create conflicting professional priorities; and these collective influences ultimately lead to compromised educational morality and decreasing public trust in the

teaching profession. Altogether, these findings reflect the illustration that ethical dilemmas arise through the interaction of diverse structural and organisational influences rather than personal ethical malpractices only.

This explanation is consistent with the integrity governance corruption nexus highlighted by Rashid and Johara (2018), who emphasise that governance standards, institutional accountability and ethical behaviour are interconnected. If governance structures fail to ensure transparency, accountability and meaningful professional collaboration, opportunities for unethical conduct become evident within organisational settings. Similarly, leadership practices which limit collaboration, professional engagement and teacher agency further decrease leaders' capacity to practice ethical judgement while addressing complex real-life challenges. The reviewed literature therefore suggests strengthening ethical behaviour by paying proper attention not only to individual professional conduct but also to the governance and organisational environments within which ethical decision-making occurs.

Collectively, the reviewed data implies that the ethical challenges experienced by secondary school teachers in Bangladesh present a fundamental mismatch between the ethical ideals interpreted within the conceptual ideals discussed in conceptual literature and the realities of professional practice identified across the reviewed studies. The mismatch supports the argument that ethical dilemmas should be conceived through broader integrity-governance-corruption nexus that influence professional decision-making across the secondary education system (Rashid & Johara, 2018). Drawing on this nexus establishes an essential foundation for considering the findings discussed in Chapter five. It also establishes the basis for the following sections, which provide in depth analysis of how governance frameworks, leadership practices and values, organisational environment and economic pressures collectively influence teachers' ethical behaviour before recognising their implications for educational leadership, policy and professional conduct.

6.2.2 Understanding the Governance-Leadership-Ethics Nexus

The reviewed studies imply that governance frameworks influence leadership practices by impacting how authority, accountability and decision-making are practiced within schools. The integrity-governance-corruption nexus highlighted by Rashid and Johara (2018) notes that governance quality and ethical standards are fundamentally interconnected. In accordance with this explanation, corruption is more likely to emerge where monopoly and administrative discretion prevail without ensuring accountability, as reflected in Klitgaard's framework (C=M+D-A) (as cited in Rashid & Johara, 2018). From the context of the

secondary education system of Bangladesh, decision-making remains exclusively centralised, with the Ministry of Education placed at the “Apex” of the administrative hierarchy. Consequently, school leaders’ function within a bureaucratic system which emphasises administrative procedure over instructional or ethical leadership. Principals often operate primarily as an implementing agent responsible for implementing centrally defined policies into practice. This type of governance framework constrains opportunities for distributive decision making and limits teachers' capability to contribute meaningfully to organisational leadership and ethical decision-making.

These governance structures also influence the organisational environments within which teachers maintain their professional responsibilities. Rather than exercising collaborative professional relationships characterised by mutual trust, reflective dialogue and shared leadership, the findings also demonstrate that institutional cultures can be dominated by hierarchical decision-making and authoritarian leadership. Such institutional cultures limit teachers’ capacity, teacher leadership and constrain opportunities for professional discussions about ethical dilemmas. Debnath (2026) identified that top-down authoritarian leadership, and the lack of distributive leadership often left teachers feeling isolated, humiliated and reluctant to contribute to school development measures. Consequently, teachers may become less interested in raising ethical concerns and challenging organisational decisions. These dilemmas occur specially they believe such practices could imperil professional relationships or workplace support. Therefore, ethical decision-making remains increasingly influenced by organisational expectations rather than presented by inclusive professional judgement and the best interests of students.

The reviewed studies also imply that governance ineffectiveness is reinforced by political interference and limitations in administrative accountability. As discussed in Chapter five, political interference in School Management Committees constantly weakens transparent decision-making and limits administrative accountability by legalising political gains to shape school governance. Likewise, unnecessary delays in financial oversight and auditing demonstrate wider fragility in accountability systems, constraining timely recognition and addressing unethical practices. These governance weaknesses extend beyond organisational ineffectiveness and lead to an administrative environment where ethical tensions are rarely considered through formal institutional mechanisms. As a result, administrative failures become significant contributors to the ethical dilemmas faced by teachers in their regular professional practice.

The findings also highlight that leadership cannot be isolated from the governance context within which it is enacted. The school leaders might possess the professional skill and individual excellence required for ethical leadership, however, their ability to practice moral judgement is shaped by wider institutional expectations, administrative obligations and organisational regulations. Ethical leadership should be considered as both individual, organisational and governance responsibility. Governance structures which emphasise bureaucratic regulations over professional relationships are most probably creating the risk of constraining opportunities for collaborative leadership, teacher engagement and ethical decision-making thereby reducing the organisational capacity to respond constructively to ethical dilemmas.

Altogether, the reviewed literature suggests that professional morality cannot be isolated from the socio-economic condition within which teachers operate. Governance revision and accountability arrangements alone are therefore unlikely to address ethical challenges if the systematic economic situations that influence teachers' professional decisions remain unaltered. Strengthening ethical behaviour needs a more informed understanding of educational leadership, governance and teacher wellbeing. It is also essential to recognise that professional morality is facilitated not only through ethical expectations and supervisory oversight but also through organisational and economic situations that encourage teachers to emphasise educational responsibility over economic pressures. This discussion establishes an essential bridge between the following sections which present how these cumulative governance, leadership and economic pressures collectively shape educational morality, public trust and professional relevance of teachers within the secondary education system of Bangladesh.

6.2.3 The Integrity-Survival Tension: Economic Pressures and Ethical Decision-Making

The previous section discussed how governance and leadership influence the organisational environment within which teachers operate. The findings from reviewed literature suggest that these systematic conditions are further intensified by existing economic pressures. Teachers' ethical decision-making cannot be perceived without considering the financial insecurity that influences their professional lives. Rather than presenting separate economic pressure, insufficient remuneration and wider resources, limitations emerge as basic contextual components which influence professional behaviour within the secondary school system of Bangladesh.

The reviewed literature highlights the underinvestment in education as a major contributor to these pressures. Despite the cornerstone role of education in nation building, Bangladesh continues to allocate approximately 1.54% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to the education sector, one of the lowest levels of public investment in the region (Alam & Zhu, 2023; Hera, 2020). The findings suggest that underinvestment has created situations in which schools' function with limited funding whereas many teachers face persistent economic uncertainty. This financial insecurity extended beyond resource insufficiency within schools and directly influences teachers' professional behaviour by fostering conditions in which the educational system is increasingly vulnerable to commercial pressures and unofficial economic activity.

One of the most important interpretations arising from the reviewed literature is the ethical dilemma between teachers' professional responsibilities and the economic situation within which they work. National policy placed teachers as respected professionals and nation-builders entrusted with upholding honesty, professionalism and equitable access to education (Kamruzzaman, 2023; Ministry of Education, 2010). The data from reviewed studies highlight that these expectations do not match the realities of an MPO salary structure which is often inadequate to meet the fundamental requirements of teachers and their households (Alam & Zhu, 2023). This interpretation resonates with Mulcahy (2015), who highlights that under-remuneration as an important reason behind teachers' reliance on private tutoring, and by Hera (2020), who notes that low remuneration leads to situations which influence unethical practices within the education system. Rather than recognising it as a teachers' simple choice between ethical and unethical practice, the evidence suggests that many are needed to compromise conflicting responsibilities between conducting professional honesty and ensuring economic survival. Therefore, ethical decision-making becomes increasingly critical, influenced not only by professional ethics but also the tested realities of maintaining family livelihoods.

The concern is especially evident in the popularisation of the shadow education sector. As presented in Chapter five, private paid tutoring has become an essential complementary source of income for many teachers. Although private tutoring is not inherently illegitimate, the findings suggest that persistent economic uncertainty may encourage exercises which highlight the limitations between legitimate educational support and commercialisation of teaching. Teachers may resort to technical professional practices, including deliberately limiting classroom instructions or creating artificial necessity for paid coaching in order to subside their inadequate incomes (Alam & Zhu, 2023). From this perspective, the

reviewed literature highlights that some teachers experience a gradual shift from their respected identity of nation builders towards a more entrepreneurial orientation, where commercial advancement predominates over professional practice. These practices are represented as adaptations to continued systematic and economic instability, rather than considering conscious ethical misconduct.

The data from reviewed studies does not consider this conduct as evidence of individual immorality or personal professional failure. It represents them as human responses to organisational and economic situations make financial activity within education increasingly appealing, and in most cases essential for financial survival. The findings therefore show unethical professional practices are not limited to a lack of personal ethical character. Instead, the reviewed studies suggest that chronic underinvestment in education, insufficient remuneration, constrained institutional support and wider governance fragility collaboratively create an environment in which survival preserves increasing influence over professional decision-making. From this point of view, the commercialisation of teaching should be considered as a systematic result of broader policy and governance structures rather than as a separate misconduct of individual morality.

Considered together, the findings suggest that professional morality cannot be isolated from the socio-economic context within which teachers operate. Governance revisions and accountability arrangements only are therefore unlikely to address ethical challenges if the systematic economic situations which influence teachers' professional decision-making remain unattenuated. Strengthening ethical behaviour requires a more informed understanding of educational leadership, governance and teacher wellbeing. Professional morality is fostered not only through ethical expectations and supervisory oversight but also through organisational and economic situations that encourage teachers to emphasise educational responsibility and economic survival. This perspective provides an essential insight to the following sections which examine how these cumulative governance, leadership and economic instability ultimately affect educational ethics, community trust and professional standings of teachers within the secondary education system of Bangladesh.

6.2.4 Educational Integrity, Public Trust and the Professional-Moral Contract

The most significant outcome identified within the reviewed literature is the gradual deterioration of teachers' moral agency. The national policy places teachers as trusted professionals and builders of nation whose influence extends beyond the limitations of classroom instructions to include shaping ethical practices and development of students' ethical behaviour. However, the evidence from reviewed literature implies that

preserving this identity has become difficult under the situations identified through reviewed studies. Alam and Zhu (2023), citing CAMPE (2018), note that approximately two-thirds of the secondary school students no longer consider teachers as moral role models, while nearly half of teachers themselves acknowledge that they do not perceive themselves as moral exemplars. This highlights a substantial degeneration in public trust in the profession and points out that the professional-ethical contract between teachers, students and the broader community have become increasingly weak. The reviewed data further suggests that these cumulative constraints have considerable implications for educational integrity, particularly in association to assessment practices. Student assessment is supposed to resonate with ethics of fairness, transparency and merit. Moreover, the evidence from reviewed literature suggests that assessment procedures may become endangered when professional responsibilities are influenced by commercial and organisational influence. As identified in Chapter five, exercises such as artificial demand for paid coaching through manipulation of classroom instructions, the tactical use of practical marks, and constant examination question paper leaks weaken trust in the fairness and credibility of educational assessment (Alam & Zhu, 2023; Kamruzzaman, 2023).

6.3 Implications for Educational Leadership, Governance and Professional Practice

The reviewed literature of this SLR suggests that addressing the ethical challenges experienced by secondary school teachers in Bangladesh requires more than strengthening professional accountability or responding to separate incidents of misconduct. The findings reflect that sustainable development depends on ensuring an organisational environment that supports ethical practices. The discussion presented in this section, therefore, demonstrates that governance frameworks, leadership practices, organisational culture, economic situations interact to influence the teachers' ethical behaviour. Consequently, the implications of this SLR extend beyond individual teachers to educational leaders, policymakers and governance institutions responsible for ensuring situations in which ethical decision-making can sustain.

6.3.1 Implications for Educational Leadership

One of the primary implications emerging from this review concerns the role of educational leadership. The reviewed data implies that highly centralised decision-making and bureaucratic leadership frameworks limit

teachers' professional responsibilities, limiting them to the role of implementing agents rather than active participants of education development (Debnath, 2026; Hossain, 2017). This reflects that educational leadership should extend beyond administrative structures towards practices which support professional trust, collaboration, distributive responsibility for ethical practice and meaningful teacher engagement in organisational decision-making (Ahmed, 2025). Leadership should not be viewed as the responsibility of school principals only; the synthesised literature highlights that it should be understood as a relational and collective procedure which encourages teacher participation and professional judgement.

The illustration resonates with Ooi and Ismail's (2026) systematic review of 74 empirical studies across Asian educational contexts, which suggests principal support as one of the most essential organisational conditions for strengthening teacher leadership and professional participation. The review suggests that when school leaders foster conditions characterised by mutual trust, motivation and psychological safety, teachers are more encouraged to practice professional judgement, engage in school development and raise ethical dilemmas without fear of humiliation or negative professional consequences. From the context of Bangladesh, this presents an important insight to the bureaucratic leadership practices highlighted throughout this review and identifies the importance of leadership attributes that support rather than simply oversee teachers.

6.3.2 Implementations for Organisational Culture and Teacher Agency

The findings also have important implications for organisational culture. The synthesised studies highlight that ethical practice is strengthened when schools encourage collaborative professional relationships rather than top-down control. Organisational environments fostering mutual trust, inclusive communication and shared professional responsibility establish greater opportunity for teachers to reflect on ethical challenges, exchange professional experience and empower collective accountability. Such environments are more likely to inspire teachers to practice professional judgement rather than becoming the passive implementing agent of administrative regulations.

The evidence further emphasised that empowering teacher agency should be considered as an essential dimension of educational development. The conceptual perspectives presented in Chapter three positioned teachers as professionals capable of practicing informed judgement and participating in leadership beyond their classrooms, although the reviewed data identify that these opportunities are constrained by centralised

governance frameworks and bureaucratic organisational environment. Teachers often act as implementing agents whose professional expertise is undermined within school decision-making procedures (Debnath, 2026; Hossain, 2017). The synthesised evidence further suggests that teacher leadership should be understood as a collective process through which teachers contribute to innovation, instructional development and organisational learning (Ooi & Ismail, 2026). From the perspective of Bangladeshi secondary school context, reinforcing teacher agency therefore has the potential of regaining professional trust, empowering ethical responsibility and uphold collaborative practices to school development.

The empirical evidence from reviewed studies further reflects that Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) as an important administrative mechanism for empowering collaboration, collective aptitude and instructional development. Ooi and Ismail (2026) support collaborative professional frameworks that inspire teachers to share views, improve collective efficacy and reinforce instructional practice through professional dialogue. Such a cooperative atmosphere contrasts with the organisational conditions discussed in Chapter five, where top-down control, professional isolation and the "might is Right" mentality discourse opportunities for meaningful collaboration. Although collaborative frameworks only cannot ensure the systematic challenges found throughout this review, they represent an essential organisational perspective for reinforcing professional relationships and upholding ethical practice.

6.3.3 Implications for Governance and Policy

Evidence from the reviewed studies implies that improvements in leadership and organisational conditions cannot be considered independently of broader administration and policy contexts. Across this review, ethical dilemmas have been associated with the interaction between administrative framework, organisational leadership and economic situations. Accordingly, empowering moral practice requires administrative systems that provide meaningful accountability while simultaneously encouraging professional autonomy, adequate resourcing and teacher wellbeing.

The empirical evidence therefore highlights that ethical leadership should be considered as a shared responsibility functioning at multiple levels of the education system which includes national policy, educational governance, school leadership and classroom practice. Sustainable development is unlikely to occur if reform focuses on individual teacher conduct while the wider administration and financial situations remain unchanged. Instead, the synthesised literature suggests that governance, leadership and teacher

wellbeing should be regarded as interconnected factors of educational development which collaboratively shape ethical practice.

Viewed collectively, the reviewed evidence provides cautious but essential perspective for optimism. Although the ethical dilemmas identified throughout this study are substantial, they are not represented as insurmountable or inevitable. Rather, Ooi and Ismail's (2026) findings indicate that empowering principal support, promoting collaborative leadership, fostering Professional Learning Communities and reinforcing teacher agency help establish promising pathways for improving organisational trust and promoting moral professional practices. These findings resonate that moral behaviour is most likely to be sustained when administrative mechanisms are complemented by fostering leadership, collaborative professional relationships and meaningful professional engagement. These implications provide the foundation for the recommendations discussed in the following section.

6.4 Recommendations

The recommendations presented in this chapter emerged from the findings of this systematic literature review and the discussion presented so far in this chapter. These recommendations are intended to address the interrelated components throughout the review rather than focusing on individuals in isolation. They respond to interrelated factors such as governance, leadership, organisational and economic components that shape the ethical challenges faced by secondary school teachers in Bangladesh. Collectively, these recommendations seek to empower ethical practice by addressing the underlying influences highlighted throughout the reviewed studies and by collaborating a more transparent, collective and professionally accountable education system.

6.4.1 Strengthening Governance and Institutional Accountability

The empirical evidence from reviewed studies identifies governance weaknesses as one of the primary contributors to the ethical challenges experienced by secondary school teachers in Bangladesh. Accordingly, empowering governance, administrative accountability should be considered as a priority for reinforcing moral practice within the secondary education system. Reviewed literature highlights that revision should primarily focus on ensuring transparency, effectiveness and fairness of School Management Committees (SMCs), which are influenced by politically biased and limited educational knowledge. Introducing merit-

driven criteria for committee membership, prioritising minimum educational qualifications, would help limit politicisation of schools while ensuring the quality of local-level decision-making (Bangladesh, 2022; Hossain, 2017; Kamruzzaman, 2023).

The greater administrative decentralisation has the potential to equipping organisational accountability. Present governance frameworks entrust decision-making authority predominantly at the central level, constraining schools' capability to address school-level moral dilemmas. Greater delegation of appropriate authority to district, upazila and school-level institutions (Haque et al., 2024; Hossain, 2017), would empower more context-driven decision-making while enhancing local accountability. However, the evidence emphasises that decentralisation should be accompanied by clear accountability mechanisms, transparent supervision systems and regular auditing to ensure that enhanced autonomy establishes moral governance rather than systematic inconsistency. Likewise, ensuring transparency of financial management, reducing prolonged audit delays recurring within the secondary education settings and strengthening public reporting mechanisms would help to administrative integrity and public trust in school governance.

6.4.2 Strengthening Ethical Leadership and Teacher Agency

The findings of this review imply that improving moral practice requires a shift in educational leadership from bureaucratic framework towards more collective and professionally supportive leadership. Across the reviewed literature, hierarchical leadership practices were associated with limited teacher agency, professional isolation and reduced opportunities for ethical dialogue. Therefore, empowering moral leadership requires school leaders to move beyond administrative compliance and create conditions characterised by professional relationship, collaboration and shared responsibility.

The principal support is one of the most essential institutional conditions for strengthening teacher leadership and professional participation (Ooi & Ismail, 2026). School leaders who encourage, provide constructive feedback and psychological safety encourage teachers to practice professional judgement, engage in institutional decision-making and respond more confidentiality to ethical dilemmas. The findings also highlight the importance of distributive leadership, whereby leadership responsibilities are shared within the school community rather than centralised only in formal administrative positions. Such practices empower collective responsibility while minimising the hierarchical administrative compliances highlighted throughout this review.

The findings further emphasise administrative Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) as systematic opportunities for collaborative learning, professional dialogue and sharing of experiences. Ooi and Ismail (2026) suggest that collaborative professional frameworks empower educators to share experience, improve collaborative efficacy and reinforce instructional culture through professional dialogue. Such supportive environments contrast with the organisational conditions discussed in Chapter five, where centralised control, professional isolation and the "Might is Right" attitude constrain opportunities for meaningful participation. Although collaborative frameworks cannot alone address the systematic challenges identified throughout this review, they present an essential organisational environment for reinforcing professional relationships and ensuring moral practice.

6.4.3 Supporting Teacher Professionalism and Wellbeing

Sustainable ethical behaviour cannot be isolated from teachers' professional wellbeing. The discussion presented in this chapter highlighted the ethical dilemma between upholding professional morality and balancing economic pressure. Teachers are expected to maintain high professional and ethical standards while simultaneously operating under economic pressure which often fail to ensure financial stability (Alam & Zhu, 2023). Accordingly, developing teachers' working atmosphere should be considered as an important factor of empowering ethical conduct.

The reviewed studies recommended addressing salary discrimination, especially those affecting MPO-enlisted teachers, whose remuneration falls below standard levels necessary to support family requirements (Alam & Zhu, 2023; Hera, 2020). Restructuring the salary pattern and addressing inequality between government and non-government teachers would help minimise the economic conditions that contribute to the commercialisation of teaching and reliance on shadow education. While it should be acknowledged that financial improvement alone cannot reduce unethical practice, the findings suggest that they would reduce one the major contributors shaping teachers' decision-making.

The findings also resonate with the implementation and enactment of a national professional Code of Conduct developed collaboratively with teacher organisations and associated educational authorities (Ministry of Education, 2010). Such structures should, thereby, clearly define professional responsibilities, ethical expectations and appropriate standards of conduct while establishing a transparent process for addressing professional misconduct. In addition, reinforcing merit-based recruitment and promoting

processes would reduce opportunities for political interference and nepotism while establishing professional recognition and reserving teachers' status as respected educational professionals (Kamruzzaman, 2023; Ministry of Education, 2010).

6.4.4 Protecting Educational Integrity

Protecting educational integrity should remain an utmost priority for educational policy and school leadership. Restoring public confidence in the education system requires assessment procedures that reflect transparency, fairness and academic merit. Measures should be taken to reduce examination misconduct, prevent question paper leakage and improve monitoring of assessment practices throughout the secondary education system (Hera, 2020; Kamruzzaman, 2023).

Special attention should be given to empowering oversight of assessment procedures that are highly subjective, and also include practical and oral examinations. Intensive refinement, transparent assessment processes and autonomous monitoring would minimise opportunities for manipulation while strengthening confidence in educational evaluation (Choe et al., 2013; Haque et al., 2024). Likewise, strong monitory measures are needed to adopt to address compelling forms of shadow education, which deliberately limiting classroom instructions to create demand for paid private coaching. Although private coaching itself is not implicitly unethical, the evidence from reviewed studies distinguishes between voluntary supplementary education and immoral practices that exploit students' reliance on teachers for personal profit (Alam & Zhu, 2023; Mulcahy, 2015).

Collectively, these measures would contribute to restoring educational integrity, reinforcing public trust in assessment procedures and enhancing the principle that educational achievement should reflect students' learning and ability rather than financial gain or opportunity for unethical practice. In essence, safeguarding educational ethics would help regenerate the professional-ethical understanding between teachers, students and community discussed throughout the reviewed studies as prerequisites to ethical practice.

6.5 Limitations of the Review

This SLR adopted a transparent and systematic approach to synthesising the available evidence on the ethical challenges experienced by secondary school teachers in Bangladesh. Nonetheless, several limitations should be acknowledged when discussing the findings.

Firstly, this review included literature published in English. Although this helped maintain consistency in the review procedure and facilitated systematic analysis, it might have overlooked relevant studies published in Bangla. As described by Özdemir et al., (2024), limiting reviews to English-language publications can reduce the comprehensiveness of the evidence base by excluding locally contextualised research. Consequently, some context associated specifically with the Bangladeshi educational context may not have been fully presented.

Secondly, the study depended on published literature rather than primary empirical evidence derived directly from teachers, school leaders or policymakers. Therefore, the findings and discussions presented in this review are based upon the quality, scope and methodological limitations included in the studies. Many students examining ethical behaviours within education depend on self-reported data, which may be a matter of underreporting and other forms of response bias.

Thirdly, although the review identified a substantial body of literature relating to educational leadership and governance, Bangladesh-based research analysing ethical challenges within secondary education remains comparatively limited. Sayfullooh et al., (2023) similarly suggest that relative paucity of research examining corruption and ethical practice at the primary and secondary levels within developing countries. Accordingly, some interpretations presented in this dissertation were informed by synthesising evidence across empirical literature, policy documents, organisational reports and conceptual literature.

Finally, reviewed literature adopted diverse methodological approaches, which includes qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods research, along with policy analyses and systematic review. Whereas this methodological multiplicity reinforced the augmentation of the synthesis, diversity in research design, context and methodological focus may reinforce the comparability of data across studies. Similarly, Ahmed (2025) implies methodological imbalances within educational leadership research, highlighting that diversity in research design should be considered when examining synthesised findings. Despite these limitations, the systematic literature review methodology provides a structure for identifying recurring patterns and developing a complete understanding of the ethical challenges faced by secondary school teachers in Bangladesh.

6.6 Suggestions for Future Research

The findings of this Systematic Literature Review (SLR) identify some areas that need further investigation to reinforce understanding of ethical behaviour within the secondary education system of Bangladesh.

First, future empirical studies engaging secondary school teachers, school leaders, School Management Committee members and policymakers would establish essential insights into how ethical dilemmas are experienced and addressed within everyday school contexts. Debnath (2026) recommends research involving wider and more diverse respondent groups to empower understanding of leadership and professional behaviour within different educational settings.

Second, longitudinal research is required to analyse how governance reforms, leadership practices and professional development initiatives influence ethical practice over time. Ooi and Ismail (2026) note that longitudinal approaches are essential to determine the long-term influence of leadership practices on school development and professional development. Such research would provide important evidence relating to the sustainability of reforms designed to ethical practice.

Third, future research should examine the implementation and effectiveness of collaborative leadership approaches, including distributive leadership, principal support and Professional Learning Communities, within Bangladeshi secondary schools. Recent studies suggest that these methods have potential for empowering teacher agency and organisational learning; however, further empirical evidence is needed to understand how they can be effectively implemented within educational settings of Bangladesh.

Finally, comparative research involving Bangladesh and other developing countries would contribute to a wider understanding of how governance frameworks, socio-economic situations and educational leadership influence teachers' ethical experiences across diverse national settings. Comparative research studies have the capability to identify contextually fitted approaches to strengthening moral behaviour while contributing to the broader international literature on educational leadership and ethics.

6.7 Overall conclusion

The systematic literature review was initiated to critically analyse the ethical challenges experienced by secondary school teachers in Bangladesh and to address the requirement for a synthesis of the literature in this sector. By incorporating conceptual perspectives, the governance frameworks and empirical evidence, the review illustrates that ethical behaviour is influenced not only by individual professional responsibility

but also by the critical blending of governance structures, leadership attributes, organisational environment and wider socio-economic situations. The empirical evidence therefore suggests that strengthening moral practice requires a systemic approach that addresses both institutional arrangements and teachers' professional realities.

A major contribution of this review justifies in its synthesis of Bangladesh-specific evidence with wider educational leadership to establish a contextually relevant understanding of the components influencing teachers' ethical behaviour. The review demonstrates that hierarchical governance, constrained teacher agency and organisational cultures which limit collaboration continue to present moral professional practice, while relational trust, collaborative leadership and corroborative institutional environments offer important directions for reinforcing moral behaviour within educational settings.

Overall, this dissertation underscores that developing ethical attributes cannot be attained only through individual endeavour and accountability. Sustainable development requires coherent governance, moral and collaborative leadership, supportive institutional cultures, meaningful teacher engagement, and continued investment in teacher professionalism. By bridging policy expectations with teachers lived professional experiences, this review establishes an evidence-based foundation for informing educational leadership, governance and regulations aimed at empowering transparency, professional honesty and ethical practice within Bangladeshi secondary school system.

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Appendix 1

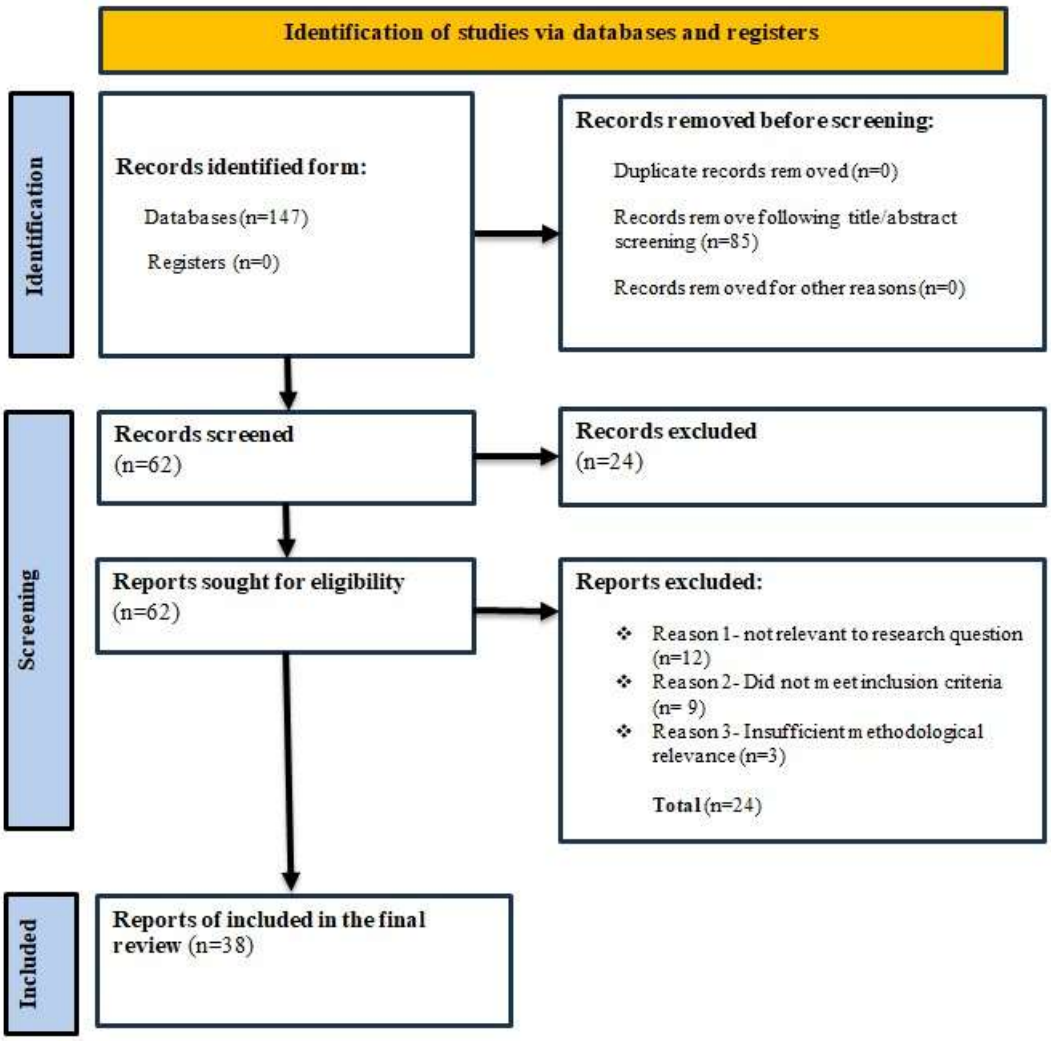


Figure 3: The PRISMA Flow Diagram (this diagram is my own creation)

Figure 3 demonstrates that for providing a robust, transparent and reproducible synthesis, a precise PRISMA -style systematic approach was employed to identify, screen and select studies to narrow an initial pool of 147 records of the selected identified databases. Following title and abstract screening, 85 records were excluded because they did not meet the scope of the review, resulting in 62 records being retained for further screening. After employing the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, 24 records were excluded for reasons including irrelevance to the research questions, failure to meet the inclusion criteria, or inadequate methodological relevance. Resulting, 38 studies were included in the final review and formed the evidence base for the thematic synthesis presented in this dissertation. The PRISMA process provides a transparent and systematic audit trail of the literature selection process.

Appendix 2

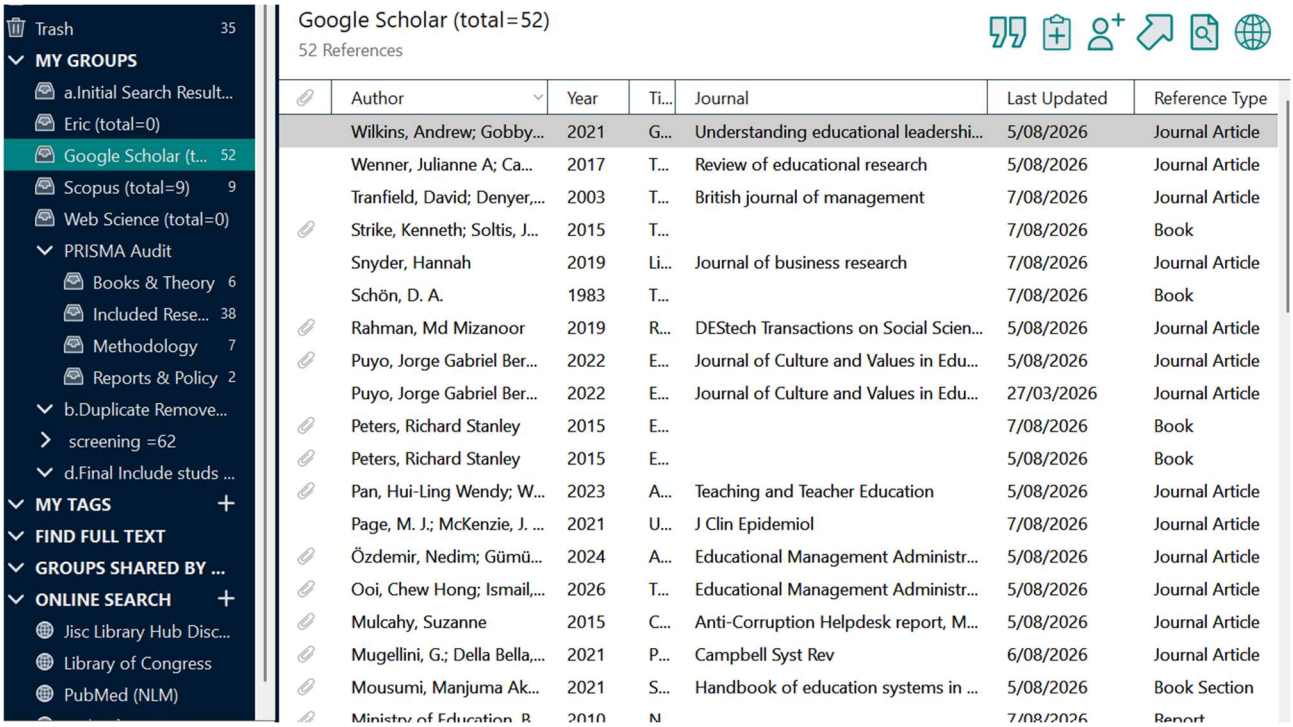


Figure 4: EndNote Literature Management Process

Endnote 21 was used throughout this review to organise, manage and keep track of the document the systematic process. Following the database searches, references were imported into EndNote and organised into separate groups according to each stage of the review. Initial search results were categorised by database (Google Scholar, Scopus, ERIC, and Web of Science), after that the duplicate records were checked and removed. The remaining records were then reviewed against predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria and imported to Included, Excluded, and Undecided groups. Studies met all the eligibility criteria were allocated to Final Included Studies group, which formed the evidence informed foundation for the synthesis presented in this review. This systematic organisation of EndNote library has enhanced the transparency, consistency and auditability of the literature selection process.

Appendix 3 (38 included studies)

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